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## Punjab CM seeks uninterrupted & regular power supply for farmers in ensuing paddy season

**NEW DELHI:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Monday impressed upon the Union Power Minister RK Singh to ensure uninterrupted and regular supply to Punjab during the ensuing paddy season.

The Chief Minister, who called on the Minister here at his office this evening, apprised the Minister about the power requirement of the state in wake of the coming paddy season. He said that the Punjab had since long been the country's food bowl as hard working and resilient farmers of the state has made the country



self-reliant in food production. Bhagwant Mann urged the Union Minister that during the paddy season the farmers of state need surplus power to contribute in national food kitty by growing paddy. The Chief Minister informed RK Singh that in wake of the paddy season it is utmost

important to ensure regular and uninterrupted supply of electricity to the farmers. He also said that it is the legitimate right of Punjab which has fulfilled the food needs of the country. He also apprised the Union Minister that Punjab government is making strenuous efforts to bring the farmers out of the wheat and paddy cycle.

The Chief Minister said that it is the need of hour to make agriculture a profitable venture. He said that the state government is already having detailed parleys with all the stakeholders including the farmers to draw a consensus on the issue. Mr Mann expressed hope that the concerted efforts of the state government will soon bear fruits.

Meanwhile, the Union Minister assured Mr Bhagwant Mann that the Union government will sympathetically consider the genuine demands of the state government. The Chief Minister was accompanied by Chief Secretary Punjab Anirudh Tiwari, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister A Venu Prasad, Principal Resident Commissioner, Punjab Bhawan Rakhee Gupta Bhandari and others. **AGENCIES**

## PM Modi hosts Sikh delegation at his official residence

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi hosted a Sikh delegation at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, the official residence of the Prime Minister. The group included people from different walks of life. Union Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri was among those present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister recalled his long association with the Sikh community. "Going to Gurudwaras, spending time in 'sewa', getting langar, staying at the homes of Sikh families has been a part of my life. The feet of Sikh saints keep falling from time to time in the Prime Minister's residence here. I keep getting the good fortune of their company", the Prime Minister said. The Prime Minister also recalled his visits to the places of Sikh heritage all over the world during his visits abroad.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said "our Gurus have taught us courage and service. The people of India have gone to



different parts of the world without any resources and achieved success through their labour. This is the spirit of New India today too", he said.

Reiterating his appreciation for the mood of new India, the Prime Minister said New India is scaling new dimensions and is leaving its mark on the whole world. Period of Corona epidemic is the biggest example of this. At the beginning of the epidemic, people with old mindset were

## India can be cheapest producer of green hydrogen: NITI Aayog

**NEW DELHI:** India can be the cheapest producer of Green Hydrogen in the world due to its enabling climatic conditions, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said on Tuesday.

In an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue, Kant pointed out that India has brought down the cost of renewable energy. "India has size and scale. India can be the cheapest producer of the Green Hydrogen in the world... India is the only climatic-blessed country to do it," he said.

While noting that China does not have climatic conditions to become the cheapest producer of Green Hydrogen, Kant said India will have to compete with Middle-East countries. Observing that the country is a large consumer of Green Hydrogen, he said India will be the capital of the world in Green Hydrogen production.

According to Kant, the long-term solution to the world does not lie in batteries. "The world cannot be dependent on lithium, cobalt and nickel... resources in the world are being managed by one country," he noted. Secondly, he observed they will create their own complexity in terms of making a cleaner world for the future. **AGENCIES**

## Efforts on to remove AFSPA completely from NE: PM

**DIPHU:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said efforts are on to remove AFSPA completely from the northeast region.

Addressing a 'Peace, Unity and Development' rally here, he said the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act could be withdrawn from various parts of the region as the law and order situation has improved in the last eight years. "As the (law and order) situation improved with 75 per cent decrease in violence in the region, there have been changes in the imposition of laws. The AFSPA was first revoked in Tripura and then in Meghalaya," he said.

The previous governments in Assam in the last three decades had extended it again and again as there was no improvement in the law and order situation, Modi said.

"Due to the proper control of the situation in the last eight years, the AFSPA has been removed from most parts of the state. We are trying to withdraw it from the remaining parts too."

"The Act is applicable in some areas of Nagaland and Manipur, and we are work-



ing speedily to revoke it completely," he said.

In a major outreach to the northeast region, the Centre had announced reduction of the disturbed areas imposed under the AFSPA in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur from April 1, after decades.

PM Modi also said the effect of the BJP's "double engine" government is evident in the return of permanent peace and speedy development in Assam.

The term "double engine" is used by BJP leaders to refer to the party being in power at the Centre as well as in a state. The government has entered into peace agreements in Assam's Karbi Anglong and in Tripura, while efforts are on to ensure permanent peace and speedy development in the entire region, he said.

"Several outfits of Karbi Anglong returned to the mainstream to march forward in the path of peace and development. The Bodo Agreement in 2020 paved the way for peace in the region and in Tripura, the NLFT also came forward for the peace, while the two-and-a-half decade long Bru-Reang issue was resolved," he said. **AGENCIES**

## Knowledge-sharing pact historic, says Bhagwant Mann

**NEW DELHI:** In a major initiative aimed at revitalising the core sectors of health and education, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday signed a knowledge-sharing agreement (KSA) with his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal.

Interacting with the media after having inked the agreement, both Chief Ministers Mann and Kejriwal described it as a historic initiative for the well-being and prosperity of people of both the states.

The agreement was signed between the Punjab and Delhi governments to share knowledge, experience and skills for the mutual welfare of the people of their respective territories. It enables the two governments to send and receive officials, ministers and other personnel to learn and share their knowledge, experience and skills for public welfare. **AGENCIES**



Announcing to replicate the Delhi Model in the state, the Chief Minister said 117 government schools and an equal number of mohalla clinics will be set up with one each in every assembly segment across the state to impart quality education and the state-of-the-art healthcare facilities.

Mann said he was elated as the state has inked an agreement with the Delhi government, which has already evolved a world-class health and education model, adding it will help the residents of Punjab to avail these top class facilities. **AGENCIES**

## Rahul attacks PM over fuel price issue

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying his federalism is "not cooperative but coercive".

His remarks came a day after Modi flagged higher fuel prices in many opposition-ruled states and urged them to reduce VAT in «national interest» to benefit the common man and work in the spirit of cooperative federalism in this time of global crisis.

Gandhi alleged that the prime minister is abdicating his responsibility by blaming states for the high fuel prices even when the Centre has taken 68 per cent of all fuel taxes. «High Fuel prices - blame states. Coal shortage - blame states. Oxygen shortage - blame states,» he said in a tweet. **AGENCIES**

## Forex Reserves down USD 3.271 BN to 600.423 bn says RBI

**MUMBAI:** The country's foreign exchange reserves decreased by USD 3.271 billion to USD 600.423 billion in the week ended April 22, RBI data showed. In the previous week, the reserves had declined by USD 311 million to USD 603.694 billion. During the reporting week, the fall in the reserves was on the account of a decline in the Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, and gold reserves, Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly data released on Friday showed. FCA dropped by USD 2.835 billion to USD 533.933 billion in the week ended April 22. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves declined by USD 377 million to USD 42.768 billion in the reporting week, according to the data. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dipped by USD 33 million to USD 18.662 billion, RBI said. The country's reserve position with the IMF decreased by USD 26 million to USD 5.060 billion in the reporting week, as per the data.

## IMD issues orange alert for NW India over heatwave

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert for Delhi-NCR and the plains of northwest India over continued heatwave conditions until May 1.

"There has been no significant rainfall since February 25. In between, on April 14 and April 21, there were dust storms in Rajasthan and Haryana but there was no significant rain. Hence the long dry spell has resulted in high temperatures," senior IMD scientist R.K. Jenamani told mediapersons.

A Western Disturbance on May 2 will bring in some relief for northwest and central India, he said.

Asked if this month's maximum temperatures for the entire country were creating any record, Jenamani said: "April 2010 was the hottest till date for all India.

"This year, even when northwest India and large parts of central India are witnessing extreme heat, the northeast region, Kerala, large parts of Tamil Nadu are experiencing heavy rainfall. So, we have to wait till April 30 to see how it averages out." **AGENCIES**



In an advisory, the IMD said that under the influence of another fresh Western Disturbance likely to affect northwest India from May 2, light/moderate isolated/scattered rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm/lightning is likely over the Western Himalayan Region during May 2-4. **AGENCIES**

## Centre earned highest revenue by taxing petrol & diesel says Ashok Gehlot

After Prime minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged the state governments to lower value added tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel in the "spirit of cooperative federalism", Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot accused the Centre of earning the highest amount of revenue in the history of the country by taxing petrol and diesel.

Rajasthan imposes VAT of 30 per cent on petrol and 22 per cent diesel, which are among the highest in the country.

"The Centre earned about Rs 26 lakh crore from excise duty in the last eight years, which is the highest amount earned by any government in the history of the country by taxing petrol and diesel. Despite low crude prices as compared to the UPA era, petrol is being



sold at more than Rs 110 a litre and diesel at more than Rs 100 per litre under the present regime.

During the tenure of the UPA government, the price of crude oil breached \$100 per barrel, but petrol price didn't exceed Rs 70/litre and diesel Rs 50/litre in view of the interest of the common

## HDFC Life Q4 profit up 12% to Rs 358 cr, FY22 earnings fall 11%

**NEW DELHI:** HDFC Life Insurance Company Ltd on Tuesday reported 12.4% year-on-year rise in net profit at Rs 357.52 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2022.

The private sector life insurer had posted a net profit of Rs 317.94 crore for the year-ago period. During January-March, total income stood at Rs 16,054.94 crore, as against Rs 19,191.32 crore in the same quarter of 2020-21, HDFC Life said in a regulatory filing. Of this, the net premium income was Rs 14,289.66 crore, up from Rs 12,868.01 crore in the year-ago period.

For the full year 2021-22, net profit was down to Rs 1,208 crore, as against Rs 1,360 crore in the previous fiscal year. «PAT for FY22 was at Rs 1,208 crore, a decline of 11 per cent versus FY21 due to higher mortality reserve created during the year. Post wave 2 (pandemic), our PAT in Q3 and Q4 improved steadily, with PAT for Q4 registering a 12 per cent year-on-year growth,» Vibha Padalkar, MD & CEO, HDFC Life said. Total premium during



the year, however, rose 19 per cent to Rs 45,963 crore from Rs 38,583 crore. HDFC Life said its assets under management (AUM) crossed Rs 2 lakh crore mark, clocking a yearly growth of 17%.

«We delivered a value of new business (VNB) for FY22 of Rs 2,675 crore, 22 per cent higher than FY21. Our VNB has grown at a 24 per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) over the past 5 years,» it said. VNB refers to present value of the future profits associated with new business written during the year. Padalkar said the company clocked a growth of 16 per cent in individual WRP in FY22 with a market share of 14.8 per cent and 9.3 per cent in the private and overall sector respectively.

## Prashant Kishor declines to join Cong; says it needs leadership, collective will to fix problems

**NEW DELHI:** Poll strategist Prashant Kishor on Tuesday declined the Congress offer to join the party and evolve its poll strategy and said more than him, the party needs leadership and collective will to fix deep-rooted structural problems through transformational reforms.

Kishor was asked by Congress president Sonia Gandhi to join the party and be a part of the Empowered Action Group-2024 and take care of its election strategy for upcoming

polls.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said Kishor has declined the offer and the party appreciates his efforts and suggestions.

Kishor had made a detailed presentation before top Congress leaders, which was discussed at length by senior leadership of the party, after which an offer was made to him.

Within a few minutes of the Congress saying that Kishor has declined the offer, he took



to Twitter and said the party needs a collective will to fix

deep-rooted structural problems through reforms.

"I declined the generous offer of Congress to join the party as part of the EAG and take responsibility for the elections. In my humble opinion, more than me the party needs leadership and collective will to fix the deep rooted structural problems through transformational reforms," Kishor said in a tweet.

Kishor was keen to join the Congress and had desired to do so without any expectations. He

had also made a presentation to the party on which its top leaders deliberated upon during the last week.

"Following a presentation and discussions with Prashant Kishor, the Congress president constituted the Empowered Action Group-2024 and invited him to join the party as part of the group with defined responsibility. He declined. We appreciate his efforts and suggestions given to the party," Surjewala said on Twitter announcing that

Kishor has declined the offer.

Sources said the reason for his not joining the Congress was the pact signed by his company I-PAC with the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) for the Telangana assembly elections and that was viewed by the Congress leadership as conflict of interest.

Kishor has been engaged by Mamata Banerjee's TMC in West Bengal as well as Nitish Kumar's JD-U in Bihar for election management. **AGENCIES**



# Punjab fully equipped to deal with any new wave of Covid-19: Mann

**CHANDIGARH:** Amidst the looming threat of new wave of the Covid 19, Punjab Chief Minister Mr. Bhagwant Mann today said that the state is fully prepared to tackle any surge in the cases of pandemic.

Participating in the virtual meeting of the Chief Ministers convened by the Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi in wake of the rise in case of Covid 19, Mr. Bhagwant Mann unequivocally said that Punjab has evolved an effective mechanism to tackle with any sort of new wave of the pandemic. He said that Punjab already has ample of resources to deal with any sort of insurgency adding that situation is under control in Punjab and every step will be further taken to protect the valuable lives of people. The



Chief Minister further said that the medical and para medical staff of the state, who are the real corona warriors, are better equipped to face any rise in cases of the Covid pandemic.

The Chief Minister said that 97% of the state's population have already got first dose of

Covid vaccination, 76% of people have been administered double dose of vaccination as compared to national percentage of 87% and 5.11 lakh people have also got booster dose to fight the pandemic. He said that at present very few cases (only 176 cases are active) in the

state adding that on an average 25 cases are coming up daily. Mr. Bhagwant Mann said that neither any patient was in critical situation nor was in the ICU and only six cases of level two are there in the state.

The Chief Minister said that there is no dearth of resources to provide the best health services to people of the state. He reiterated that the state government is duty bound to make all necessary arrangements to prevent possible fourth or next wave of COVID-19 adding he said that regular monitoring of the Covid situation is being done by the state government. Mr. Bhagwant Mann said that there are already sufficient number of beds available and the state is adequately prepared for any surge in the number of cases.

The Chief Minister said that there are 1236 beds at Government Medical College Amritsar, 1450 beds at Government Medical College Patiala and 1025 beds at Government Medical College, Faridkot. He said that 360, 560 and 400 Oxygen beds are available at Amritsar, Patiala and Faridkot respectively. Mr. Bhagwant Mann further said that the number of ICU beds in Amritsar are 280, in Faridkot 250 and in Patiala 280 adding that there are 165 COVID ventilator beds in Amritsar, 96 in Patiala and 141 in Faridkot. On the occasion Health Minister Dr. Vijay Singla, Chief Secretary Mr. Anirudh Tiwari, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Mr. A Venuprasad and others were also present. **AGENCIES**

## CM Khattar names medical college after Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

**PANIPAT:** Remembering the supreme sacrifices of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday made several announcements to commemorate his memory at a state-level function here to mark the 400th Parkash Purb.

The ground where the function was held will be named after Guru Tegh Bahadur, besides naming the upcoming Government Medical College in Yamunanagar after the ninth Sikh guru who stood up against forcible conversions by then Mughal ruler. «An exhibition of weapons used by Guru Tegh Bahadur would be showcased across the country. For this, we have also decided to provide a vehicle to carry these relics,» Khattar, who had donned a turban, said. Congress leader Bhupinder Hooda also participated in the programme, besides Deputy Chief Minister



Dushyant Chautala and Uttarakhand Governor Lt General Gurmit Singh (retd). Before addressing tens of thousands of devotees converged to attend the function, the Chief Minister first went to the main «pandal» and paid obeisance to the Guru Granth Sahib.

«Khattar said Guru Tegh Bahadur had made a supreme sacrifice while raising his voice against religious atrocities and injustice. «Today we are celebrating the 400th Prakash-

Purab of Guru Tegh Bahadur as a part of ongoing celebrations of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, an initiative of the government of India to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of independence. «The main purpose of organising such a grand event is to ensure that the inspiring stories of the supreme sacrifices made by «Hind Ki Chadar» Guru Tegh Bahadur should reach every sphere of the country and our future generations can take inspiration from him,» he said.

## Congress panel recommends suspension of Jakhar for 2 yrs

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress Disciplinary Committee on Tuesday recommended the suspension of its former Punjab unit chief Sunil Jakhar for two years and his removal from all party posts, besides recommending removal of Kerala leader K V Thomas from all party positions for anti-party activities, sources said.

The disciplinary panel of the Congress, which met here this morning, also recommended the suspension of five party MLAs in Meghalaya, who had supported the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) in the state, while defying the party directives. The Committee has given its recommendations to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who will take necessary action, the sources pointed out.

The five-member Committee is chaired by senior party leader A K Antony and Tuesday's meeting was attended by panel members Tariq Anwar, J P Aggarwal and G Parameswar, besides Antony. Ambika Soni was not present during the meeting. Ahead of the Congress disciplinary committee meeting, Jakhar had said those who still have a conscience will be punished.



Aaj, sarkalamhongeunkejinnmeabhizameerbaakihai. (Today, those with a conscience will be beheaded). (My apologies to Javed Akhtar Sahab), said Jakhar in a tweet. Jakhar had criticised former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and termed him a liability for the party after the Congress lost to the AAP in Punjab.

Thomas had attended a seminar organised by the CPI(M) on April 9 in Kerala against the party's wishes and local state leaders had been seeking action against him.

Sources said the five Congress MLAs in Meghalaya had joined the BJP-backed ruling alliance in the state, for which a show-cause notice was sent to them and an explanation sought from them. The legislators had joined the MDA in February, which brought the two arch foes together in a ruling coalition, and left Congress leaders in the state fuming. **AGENCIES**

## High excise duties in Punjab hit fuel pump dealers

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking Chief Minister to lower excise duties on the fuels, petroleum dealers in Punjab, especially in border areas, on Wednesday said it became difficult to operate as diesel is at least cheaper by Rs 6 and petrol by Re 1 compared to Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

«Successive governments in Punjab -- the Akalis and the Congress had been regularly increasing VAT on petrol and diesel, resulting in vast difference in petroleum prices in Punjab as compared to neighboring states,» Monty Sehgal, spokesman for the Petrol Pump Dealers Association, Punjab, told IANS.

He said the rate difference of petroleum products with



neighboring states is robbing the state government of its revenue, encouraging unscrupulous trade practices and of late, the emergence of oil mafia in the state.

Punjab is predominantly an agricultural state with majority of population living in rural areas. Forty-five per cent of total

diesel consumed in Punjab is used in agriculture, 25 per cent in transportation, 20 per cent in industry and 10 per cent by retail consumer.

The consumption in terms of litres of petrol and diesel is showing a continuous downward trend in Punjab. «Sales of diesel in terms of litres have dropped by about 30 per cent in the last couple of years,» he said.

The Punjab government, he said, is losing an estimated revenue of Rs 400 to 500 crore annually to its neighboring states due to business shift and the emergence of oil mafia due to massive rate difference with other states.

The worst affected districts include Pathankot, Ropar, Hoshiarpur, and Mohali.

## Absconding female drug smuggler arrested after 20 days

**SATISH HANDA**  
Ambala

Sadar police station Ambala-Cantt succeeded in arresting a female drug smuggler, supplier Guddi a resident of Deha Colony Ambala-Cantt and wife of a former municipal councillor Rajesh in drugs business along with son since a long time. She along with her associates attacked police party went to her residence on April 6, 2022 in a case registered against her under NDPS Act after police arrested a youth near Netaji Subhash Park Ambala-Cantt from him police recovered heroine. During investigation youth disclosed that he had purchased drugs from Guddi. When police team went for her arrest and conducted raid at the godown illegally built on encroaching government land adjoining her residence (which was demolished by municipal



committee Ambala-Cantt after the incident) was attacked and in the meantime she managed to flee along with gold & silver jewellery, cash and stocks of drugs in her car. However, police arrested her husband Rajesh and son Prince also involved in drugs business since both were involved in attack on police.

Naresh Kumar SHO Sadar police station Ambala-Cantt told that search for the arrest of absconding Guddi started soon after she was found abscond-

ing and police teams conducted raids at several places in Haryana and Punjab for her arrest but failed to find any clue about her for about 20 days. However, Guddi was trapped in police net after 20 days when police on a clue raided a narrow street at Topkhana adjoining cantonment area and arrested her. A case was registered against Guddi under NDPS Act and she was remanded to police custody for four days by the court on April 26.

## 5 killed as vehicle falls into canal in Punjab



**CHANDIGARH:** Five people, including an NRI, were killed after their vehicle fell into a canal in Punjab's Ludhiana district, police said on Tuesday.

The incident took place when Jatinder Singh, who recently returned from Canada, along with his five friends, was returning after meeting his

relative at Lehal village in the Khanna area on Monday night, they said.

The vehicle lost control and fell into the Sirhind canal near Jagera village, they said.

Station House Officer Maloud Gurdeep Singh said Jatinder Singh and four others were killed and one person survived the incident. **AGENCIES**

## Semi-nude farmers protest against sugar mill to get Rs 82 cr against sugar cane supplies



**SATISH HANDA**  
Naraingarh

Like past several years, large number of farmers in Ambala district supplied sugar cane to Natabangar Sugar Mill at Banodi in Ambala district frequently protesting outside the mill gate to get payment against supplies of sugarcane, besides blocking traffic on the road since past sometime intensified their protests holding a semi-nude protest outside the mill to get payment for amount worth Rs 82 crore pending against the mill towards supply of sugar cane in past few months.

According to information, long pending amount worth Rs 62 crore was paid to sugar cane growers in the area by the mill management till December end 2021. Now 21 members farmers

committee led by their president Sigar Rachhedi has made an appeal to SDM Naraingarh in getting their pending payment worth Rs 82 crore against supply of sugar cane to the mill this year on the assurance of timely payment by the administration, failing which they gave final ultimatum that they will be left with no alternative except to strongly protest outside the mill as well as outside the office of Cane Commissioner at Panchkula on May 2, 2022 since sugar mill has been closed with effect from April 8, 2022. Protesting farmers warned to stop supplies of sugar cane to this mill in future. They said, sugar cane is being supplied to this sugar mill on the assurance by the administration that timely payment will be made to them by the management of mill against supplies.

## SVB investigation in 15 corruption cases in Haryana complete, 8 including Chief Engineer booked

**SATISH HANDA**

State vigilance Bureau (SVB) Haryana has completed investigation in 15 corruption cases in government offices in the state and submitted final report to government for action recommending registration of criminal cases against 11 alleged accuse employed in government offices as well as private persons, besides four other cases to take departmental action against persons involved in embezzlements. There are several other corruption cases yet pending with SVB for investigation and necessary action.

According to SVB report, there are several officers as well as employees working in government departments in the state including PWD (B&R), Food Supply Department, Central Cooperative Bank, SHVPN, Haryana Roadways Jind, Municipal Corporation Gurugram & Faridabad, SDM office Radaur, police stations at Nuh, Chika, Faridabad and a long list of alleged accuse caught red-handed while accepting bribe trapped in vigilance net.

State Vigilance Bureau registered a case against eight employees of Municipal

Corporation Faridabad including Chief Engineer D.R. Bhaskar, Executive Engineer Raman Sharma, Junior Engineer Deepak Thapar and few employees working in accounts department allegedly involved in Rs 200



crore fraud in which payment was released to a contractor Satveer on the basis of fake bills for installation of inter-locking tiles and various other construction jobs without doing any work. Arrested contractor during preliminary investigation disclosed that Bhaskar himself was mastermind in this case and payment was made to him without getting work done. A case was registered against eight including Chief Engineer on March 28, 2022 and the contractor Satveer was already arrested on the complaint of State Vigilance Bureau.

When Vigilance team tried

to contact Bhaskar his mobile phone was found switched off, his house was locked suspecting absconding or might have left the country. However, Vigilance Department issued look out notice against him at all airport authorities in the country. Meanwhile, two officers of audit department has been suspended by Additional Chief Secretary Finance Department Haryana.

According to State Vigilance Department report 22 state government employees including senior officers were arrested while accepting bribe this year which include three class I officers and 18 class III government officers. Director General State Vigilance Bureau Shatrughit Kapoor told that campaign against government employees accepting bribe has been intensified in the state. He said, cases against 13 government employees has been registered recently under various sections of IPC which include three class I officer, one class II officer and seven class III officers besides two private persons apart from departmental investigation recommended in case of 14 gazetted and five non-gazetted officers.

## First-of-its-kind platform for startups in Punjab



Innovation Mission Punjab (IMPunjab), a private-public partnership for local startups, on Wednesday launched a first-of-its-kind platform for startups named PINE (Punjab Incubators Network for Entrepreneurs) Matchmaking at ISB Mohali near here.

In addition to the various initiatives, IMPunjab is mobilising a global pool of ambassadors and partners towards startups for mentorship, market access and funding enablement.

Under the initiative, PINE, the matchmaking event, will happen quarterly to connect various early-stage startups with technology and business Incubators from across the state.

This is where upcoming and promising startups to explore how multiple Incubators can support them for research, business and tech advisory, product and market validations, mentorship, funding, opportunity to be co-incubated, and much more.

The platform is envisioned to be a one-stop shop to unleash infinite possibilities with a healthy pipeline of incubators for startups, innovators, or entrepreneurs to present their ideas. The PINE matchmaking meetup saw participation from incubators like GNDEC STEP Ludhiana, SACC Mohali, NIT Jalandhar TACC, TIET STEP (Patiala), IISER i-Rise Mohali, AIC-ISB Mohali, CUCEED (Rajpura) and NABI-CIAB (Mohali).

Talking about the event, Somveer Anand, CEO & Mission Director, IMPunjab, said, «Punjab has a burgeoning entrepreneurial ecosystem with 450 startups, 20 plus incubators and our mission is to act as a catalyst to strengthen it. «PINE Matchmaking is an initiative to nurture future leaders by empowering and supporting their ventures in their new path as entrepreneurs. **AGENCIES**

# Bhagwant Mann has sold off interests of Punjab to Delhi-Badal

**CHANDIGARH:** Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today said Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann had sold off the interests of Punjab to Delhi in the garb of a Knowledge Sharing Agreement and now AAP Convener Arvind Kejriwal had become the de-facto chief minister of Punjab.

Terming the development as a black day in the history of Punjab, the SAD President said never before in the history of the State had outsiders been given control of the State and its future generations in this manner. «A municipality president has been given charge of chief ministership of Punjab. Punjab has become subservient to Delhi which is not even a State». Asking the Punjab chief

minister to explain why he had betrayed Punjab and its people by surrendering its autonomy to Delhi, Mr Sukhbir Badal said Bhagwant Mann had hurt the pride of Punjab. «The agreement makes it clear that all ministers and officers of Punjab will now report to Kejriwal and that the latter will have access to all Punjab government files. This is also a case of violation of the official secrecy act even as clause 3 of the agreement binds future governments to decisions taken under it. We will approach the Punjab Governor and urge him to direct the chief minister to withdraw his assent to the anti-Punjab agreement. The party will also plan its next course of action in an emergency meeting of its core committee».



Asserting that the «agreement» could have dangerous repercussions, Mr Badal said «we apprehend that a situation could arise whereby Kejriwal could force the Punjab chief minister to sign away the State's river waters to Haryana and Delhi in the same manner in which Congress

chief minister Darbara Singh was coerced into doing so by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi». He said the situation had already taken a turn for the worst. «Punjab ministers are now even finding it difficult to defend their State with the food and civil supplies minister offering only «no comments»

when asked to spell out Punjab's stand on the SYL canal».

Asking Bhagwant Mann not to act like a rubber stamp and cancel the agreement if he had any Punjabi pride, Mr Badal said the chief minister should know that Kejriwal had his eyes on the chief minister's chair of Punjab from the very beginning. «Immediately after the AAP government was sworn in, Kejriwal started summoning the State chief secretary and police chief to Delhi and even deciding on transfers and postings. When this attracted criticism a conspiracy was hatched to institutionalize the arrangement by bringing in the «Knowledge Sharing Agreement» which is nothing but a document designed to hand over the administrative control of Punjab to the Delhi government».

Referring to today's press conference in Delhi where the purported agreement between the two States was signed, Mr Badal said the Punjab chief minister said he wanted to learn and take benefit of the Delhi Model whereas Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia had gone on record to having said Delhi copied the Meritiorious School model of Punjab which was put in place by former CM Parkash Singh Badal.

Mr Badal said the Punjab CM was also not aware of the strides made by Punjab in the field of Education and Health during the erstwhile SAD led government. He said it was the truth that Delhi ranked 32nd in the national performance grading of schools whereas earlier during the SAD led government Punjab had se-

cured the second position in a national survey on school education. He said it was also a fact that only 203 out of 1027 government schools in Delhi had Principals and that there was an overall shortage of 24, 500 teachers in Delhi. He said similarly in the case of Health, 270 out of the 480 Mohalla Clinics were non-operational even as the Health infrastructure of the Delhi government had collapsed during the Covid crisis. He said the Punjab chief minister apparently even forgot to tell his counterpart the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Armed Preparatory Schools established by S Parkash S Badal resulted in 97 cadets joining NDA and that 65 products of these academies had become commissioned officers in the army. **AGENCIES**



# Government blocks 16 more YouTube channels for spreading disinformation

Union Centre on Monday blocked 16 YouTube channels, including six operating from Pakistan, and a Facebook account for spreading disinformation related to India's national security, foreign relations and public order, according to an official statement.

The blocked YouTube channels and the Facebook account had a cumulative viewership of over 68 crore and were spreading "false, unverified information to create panic, incite communal disharmony and disturb public order in India", the statement issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

"None of the digital news publishers had furnished information to the ministry as required under Rule 18 of the



IT Rules, 2021," it added.

The ministry said the content published by some of the blocked India-based YouTube channels referred to the members of a particular community

as terrorists and incited hatred among various religious communities.

"Such content was found to have the potential to create communal disharmony and

disturb public order," it said. The ministry said multiple India-based YouTube channels were publishing unverified news and videos that had the potential to trigger panic among various sections of the society.

"Examples include false claims related to announcement of a pan-India lockdown due to COVID-19, thereby threatening the migrant workers, and fabricated claims alleging threats to certain religious communities etc. Such content was observed to be detrimental to public order in the country," it said.

According to the ministry, the blocked YouTube channels based in Pakistan were found to have been used in a coordinated manner to post fake news about India on various subjects such as the Army,

Jammu and Kashmir and foreign relations in the light of the situation in war-hit Ukraine.

"The content of these channels was observed to be completely false and sensitive from the perspective of national security, sovereignty and integrity of India, and India's friendly relations with foreign States," the ministry said.

The ministry issued an advisory to private television news channels last week, cautioning them against making false claims and using scandalous headlines.

The blocked YouTube channels include MRF TV LIVE, Saini Education Research, Tahaffuz-e-Deen India and SBB News. The channels based in Pakistan include AjTak Pakistan, Discover Point, Reality Checks and The Voice of Asia. **AGENCIES**

# SGPC delegation meets Uttarakhand Governor to discuss issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi, Haridwar

**AMRITSAR:** A high-level delegation of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) today met Uttarakhand Governor Lt. Gen. (Retd) S. Gurmit Singh to discuss the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib, Haridwar and submitted a memorandum demanding an early resolution to the long-pending issue.

The SGPC delegation included Senior Vice-President Raghujit Singh, General Secretary Karnail Singh, SGPC member Rajinder Singh, SGPC's Sikh Mission Raipur, Chhattisgarh in-charge Gurmit Singh, and Sikh leader from Vishakhapatnam Dilshah Singh.

The delegation leaders appealed to Uttarakhand Governor to intervene for resolving the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib. Giving information in this regard, Raghujit Singh said, "SGPC is serious about the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib and making constant efforts for



the resolution of this issue. We met Uttarakhand Governor and demanded from him that Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib at Har Ki Paurhi, Haridwar should be established again, so that, the issue of this historical shrine of Sikh Quam (nation) could be resolved as per Sikh sentiments." Raghujit Singh added that taking the SGPC's demand seriously, the Uttarakhand Governor has assured to resolve this issue at the earliest. Meanwhile, the SGPC delegation also honoured Uttarakhand's Governor Lt. Gen.

(Retd) Gurmit Singh.

Notably, SGPC in the past has made several appeals to the Government of India and concerned state governments by sending resolutions passed in its general house sessions demanding a resolution to the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib at the earliest. Apart from this, several leaders of SGPC have met the Prime Minister of India, Home Minister, and Chief Ministers of concerned states, while demanding to resolve this issue. **AGENCIES**

# Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mevani granted bail

**KOKRAJHAR:** Independent MLA from Gujarat Jignesh Mevani was granted bail on Monday by a Kokrajhar Court in a case related to a tweet by him against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Kokrajhar First Class Judicial Magistrate Bhavna Kakoty granted him bail with several conditions, details of which are awaited.

Mevani was taken back to the Kokrajhar Jail after the hearing, and his lawyers said they are working on the formalities related to the bail bond.

Mevani was arrested on April 19 from Palanpur town in Gujarat after an FIR was lodged in Kokrajhar Police Station over his tweet, in which he had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi "considered Godse as God".

The MLA was brought to Kokrajhar on transit remand and remanded to a three-day police custody on April 21 by the Kokrajhar Chief Judicial Magistrate **AGENCIES**

# Facing suspension, Jakhar wishes Congress 'good luck'

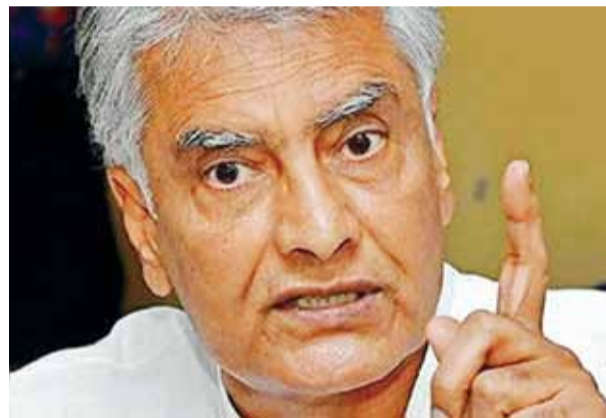
**CHANDIGARH:** Shortly after the Congress disciplinary panel recommended his two-year suspension on Tuesday, former Punjab unit chief Sunil Jakhar wished his party good luck while refusing to reveal his own plans.

I wish the Congress good luck, Jakhar said when reporters sought his reaction to the disciplinary committee's recommendation. He refused to comment when asked what would be his next step.

The committee, which met Tuesday morning in Delhi, gave its recommendations to party president Sonia Gandhi, who will take the necessary action.

Ahead of the panel's meeting, Jakhar had said those who still have a conscience will be punished.

Aaj, sar kalam honge unke jimme abhi zameer baaki hai. (Today, those with a conscience will be beheaded). (My apologies to Javed Akhtar Sa-



heb), the former MP said in a tweet earlier in the day.

The party disciplinary committee had on April 11 given a show-cause notice to Jakhar for alleged anti-party activities and sought a reply within a week. But he chose not to reply.

Jakhar had criticised former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and termed him a liability for the

party after the Congress lost the Punjab Assembly polls to the Aam Aadmi Party.

Some party leaders, including former minister Raj Kumar Verka, had also demanded action against Jakhar, accusing him of using objectionable language against Channi and the Scheduled Caste community during a TV interview.

But Jakhar had rejected the charge, saying his remarks

were twisted out of context. He had also expressed regret if anybody was hurt by his comments.

He had earlier created a flutter claiming that 42 MLAs wanted him to be the chief minister and only two backed Channi after the unceremonious exit of Amarinder Singh last year.

He was among the frontrunners for the CM's post after Amarinder Singh was unseated by the party.

Earlier, Jakhar was replaced by Navjot Singh Sidhu as the Punjab Congress president.

His chances of becoming the CM were scuttled after party veteran Ambika Soni said the Congress should go with a Sikh faced in Punjab.

The disciplinary panel also recommended the suspension of five Meghalaya MLAs who had supported the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA), defying the party directives. **AGENCIES**

# Delhi court takes cognizance of ED charge sheet in Indo-Bangla border cattle smuggling case

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi court has taken cognizance of a charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate against former TMC youth wing leader Vinay Mishra, the alleged kingpin of a cattle smuggling racket across the India-Bangladesh border, Mohammad Enamul Haque and others.

Special Judge Sanjay Garg issued summons against Mishra, his brother Vikas Mishra and other accused persons in the matter, and directed them to appear before the court on June 1.

I have gone through the complaint and the accompanying documents. There is sufficient material to proceed against the accused. Accordingly, the cognizance of the offence under sections of PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) is taken, the judge said in an order passed on April 19. The charge sheet was filed through Nitesh Rana, ED's special public prosecutor, who told the court that Haque acquired huge amount of wealth from proceeds of crime generated out of cross-border activities and violated several laws.

According to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the case was lodged following an FIR by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in Kolkata against Satish Kumar, the then Commandant, Border Security Force (BSF). The FIR alleged that Haque along with Kumar and other public servants and private persons was involved in the smuggling of cattle. It was alleged that smuggling of cattle through the India-Bangladesh border was carried out at Haque's instance and he paid bribes to security personnel for facilitation of the trade. **AGENCIES**

# Over 45 cr people lost hope of getting job due PM Modi's 'masterstrokes', alleges Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the unemployment issue, alleging over 45 crore people have lost hope of getting a job due to his "masterstrokes".



He claimed that Modi is the "first such prime minister" in 75 years to do so. "New India's new slogan -- 'har ghar berozgaari, ghar ghar berozgaari' (there is unemployment in every household).

"In 75 years, Modi is the first such prime minister whose masterstrokes have led to over 45 crore people losing the hope of getting a job," the former Congress chief tweeted in Hindi.

He also cited a news report that claimed 2.1 crore jobs were lost in the last five years and 45 crore people have stopped searching for a job.

# Vijay Sampla appointed NCSC chairperson for second time

**NEWDELHI:** BJP leader and former Union minister Vijay Sampla has been appointed as the chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) for a second time.

The official order for his appointment was issued by President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday.

Sampla had resigned as the NCSC chairman ahead of the Punjab elections and had contested the polls.

Sampla, a prominent Dalit face of Punjab, began



his political career in 1998 as the Sarpanch of Sofpind

village in Jalandhar Cantonment. **AGENCIES**

# UP ministers, IAS officers asked to declare assets



**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday directed his ministers to declare within three months all property owned by them and their families and asked IAS and IPS officials to put similar details online.

He also said that the ministers' family members should not intervene in the government work.

The CM while addressing a special sitting after the cabinet meeting said that the IAS, IPS, and the Provincial Civil Service officers should also declare their and their family members' properties and make it available on an online portal for the people to see it.

"For a healthy democracy, the conduct of public representatives is very important. According to this spirit, all the honourable ministers should make a public declaration of all movable and immovable property of themselves and their family members within a period of next three months after taking oath," Adityanath said.

The code of conduct prescribed for the ministers should be followed in compliance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act in letter and spirit, he said.

"All ministers should ensure that there is no interference of their family members in the government work. We have to set an example by our conduct," he said. A presentation of all the departments for the next 100 days, six months, and a five-year work plan has been done, the CM said. It should now be

implemented on the ground, he said. The CM directed all departments to guide officers to ensure completion of projects in a set time-frame.

Under guidance of the Prime Minister, we all strive to fulfil the resolution of 'Antyodaya,' he said. The CM has formed 18 groups, each headed by a cabinet minister, to tour the entire state and hold meetings with the local leaders and prominent people across districts to know people's issues. He said these ministers will complete a visit of the entire state before the next assembly session begins.

"The group of 18 will visit all divisions beginning from Friday to Sunday, Adityanath said. There are 18 divisions in the state with 75 districts under them. In the first phase each group of ministers will be given responsibilities of different divisions on a rotational basis," he said. The CM said that during these three-day visits, each team will have to stay at least for 24 hours in a district. He said that the senior ministers leading the team should visit at least two districts, and other ministers should take charge of one district each. Each group should hold a divisional review meeting, while connecting with districts under each division virtually.

He also directed the ministers to engage with local legislators, former public representatives, and the party members to hear their suggestions during these visits, and try to address them. **AGENCIES**

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Man accused in cheating case nabbed after 12 yrs

**THANE:** The economic offences wing (EOW) of the police has arrested a man who had been on the run for 12 years after allegedly cheating investors of over Rs 7.6 crore in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Thursday. Based on a tip-off, Sandeep Zhumbarlal Pokhrana was apprehended from Pune on Monday, the official said. Pokhrana had allegedly cheated 13,900 persons by wooing them to invest in his firm and promising them lucrative returns. He operated a financially unviable scheme at his firm and published about the same in the social media and through publications, he said. Investors were cheated to the tune of Rs 7.64 crore and an offence under relevant provisions of the IPC, RBI Act, Prize and Chit Fund Money Circulation Scheme (Banning) Act, MPID Act, had been registered with the Mahatma Phule police station in 2010, the official said. The accused had been on the run for 12 years, he said, adding that further probe is underway. **AGENCIES**

## Spice Jet to start Bhavnagar-Pune flight from May 5

SpiceJet on Tuesday said it will start flights connecting Bhavnagar in Gujarat with Pune and Mumbai from May 5 onwards. In a statement, the airline said it will also start additional flights on the Ahmedabad-Pune route. The Bhavnagar-Pune flight will operate under the Central government's UDAN scheme, it mentioned. Under the UDAN scheme, financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and underserved airports and to keep airfares affordable. SpiceJet will deploy its Q400 aircraft for the flights. **AGENCIES**

# Kumar Vishwas moves high court, seeks quashing of Punjab police FIR against him

Former AAP leader Kumar Vishwas on Tuesday moved the Punjab and Haryana high court, seeking quashing of an FIR lodged against him in Punjab over his "inflammatory statements" against Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

In the petition, Vishwas, also a poet, submitted that the case registered against him by the Rupnagar police was a sheer abuse of the process of law and politically motivated.

The manner in which the investigating agency is proceeding, it is apparent that it is investigating agency is trying to curtail the liberty of the petitioner by adopting a procedure unknown to law, Kumar said in his petition filed through his counsel Mayank Aggarwal and Himanshu Gupta.

It was further submitted that the registration of the FIR against Kumar is absolutely illegal, arbitrary and unjust and it is nothing but a means to wreak vengeance through politically motivated criminal investigation by using the state machinery for oblique motive of political gain.

The petition is yet to be listed



for hearing. The petitioner stated the lodging of the FIR reveals an apparent malafide intention and the abuse of the process of law.

The case has been registered at an alien jurisdiction at Rupnagar Police Station which has nothing but an oblique motive to settle political scores as the alleged statements/interviews were given in Mumbai, he said.

The case was lodged against Vishwas in Rupnagar town's Sadar police station on April 12. The former AAP leader ahead of the assembly elections had accused Kejriwal of supporting separatists. The Punjab police on April 20 had visited Vishwas's home in Ghaziabad and summoned him for questioning.

Vishwas was booked following a complaint in which it was

alleged that he gave "inflammatory statements" against Kejriwal on news channels and social media platforms, alleging Kejriwal's links with separatist elements.

The complainant had claimed that when he was roaming in villages along with AAP supporters for the redress of people's grievances, some unknown masked men stopped them and called them Khalistani.

Similar incidents have been occurring regularly. All this started after Kumar Vishwas gave inflammatory statements against AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on news channels / social media platforms alleging AAP links with separatist elements," the complainant had said.

The FIR was registered under various sections, including 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place etc), 505 (whoever makes, publishes or circulates any statement, rumour or report), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC and 125 of the Representation of People Act. **AGENCIES**

# Mamata to go to Delhi for national conclave, will not meet PM



**KOLKATA:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she will go to Delhi on Friday to attend a national conclave slated to be held there the next day where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present, but will not meet him as she will return to the city to attend the programmes on May Day and Eid-ul-Fitr. Banerjee, who was speaking to reporters on Thursday, said that she has got her return ticket booked.

"I will reach New Delhi tomorrow (Friday) night and return the next day (Saturday). I have my tickets booked. That is the reason why I will not get the time to meet the PM this time. I have no appointment with the PM," Banerjee told reporters at the state secretariat on

Thursday. The TMC chief said she will attend May Day programmes and the Eid namaz on Red Road either on May 2 or May 3, depending on the sighting of the moon, as she has been doing for the past several years.

"April 30 will therefore be a crucial day for me ... The minorities comprise 33 per cent of population of Bengal and I attend the Red Road namaz every year. I will have to attend it this year too. And then there is Akshay Tritiya. I attend the programmes of all festivals," she said.

Chief ministers of other states, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana and judges of high courts are invitees at the conclave on the pendency of cases across courts in the country. **AGENCIES**



## Ways to reboot the Rural Economy after COVID-19

India may enter into the 4th phase of lockdown; we are caught between the dilemma of savings lives or protecting livelihoods by keeping the economy open and running. The most marginalised, daily wage earners, unorganised labour class and those at the fringes of our society have been disproportionately affected. With the migrant labourers returning home with no cash or savings, village communities are stressed due to the loss of remittance income, and the added mouths to feed.

India is primarily an agrarian economy supporting 60% of the population, reviving agriculture and allied sectors would be critical in the coming days. While we continue supporting in immediate relief efforts, we must work towards creating small local growth clusters with more self-reliant systems of production, processing and marketing to create livelihoods and employment for 0.5 to 1 million households. At PRADAN, we are directing our energy to create around 10 such growth clusters which will positively impact a population of 5 million. Some key elements of our strategy are briefly captured below: Creating public awareness across all our 10,000+ project villages on safety and hygiene issues, including maintaining social distancing.

Strengthening public systems to enrol families who do not have Ration cards, Jan Dhan accounts, MGNREGS Job cards and other such documentation into former government systems so that they can receive state benefits and the slew of relief measures that seek to reach the neediest and deserving. Facilitating provision of relief work through MGNREGS (100 days job guarantee scheme) by creating assets like plantations, water-harvesting structures, land treatment measures, etc. which can provide immediate wages as well as improve livelihoods in the medium and long-term. As food stocks dwindle, the nutrition status of households would be adversely impacted. To ensure nutrition security, about 100,000 vulnerable families would need to be supported to set up their kitchen gardens.

Enumerating all migrant labourers who have returned home and facilitate those willing to return to their place of employment by re-activating the agent networks. For those who do not want to return, PRADAN plans to groom and promote 10,000 such youth as Entrepreneurs or Self-employed, who are linked to local livelihood eco-systems.

Facilitating backyard poultry and goat rearing with provisions for improvement on sheds, vaccines and other support to 100,000 families.

Encouraging 100 Farmer Producer Organisation to support around 400,000 Small and Marginal Farmers by providing all necessary services to the farmer. For the coming years, FPOs can help SMFs cultivate cereals, oilseeds and pulses to ensure food security at the household level as well as contributing to the national food security. PRADAN also plans to promote 100 Farm produce pick-up and selling to final consumer vehicle support centres called "Veggies-on-wheels", as a move towards shorter and more localised supply chains.

Working with 250,000 farmers towards a new paradigm by shifting from intensive chemical-based agriculture to adopting sustainable eco-friendly agriculture practices. Tribals in forest fringe areas, who are dependent on Non-Timber Forest Produce would be supported for smooth access to schemes under Pradhan Mantri Vandhan Yojana.

### LETTERBOX

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## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. CHAENG/2001/03736

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER BAJWA ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA

PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI, PUNJAB 160059

PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER BAJWA OWNER\* : FW MEDIA

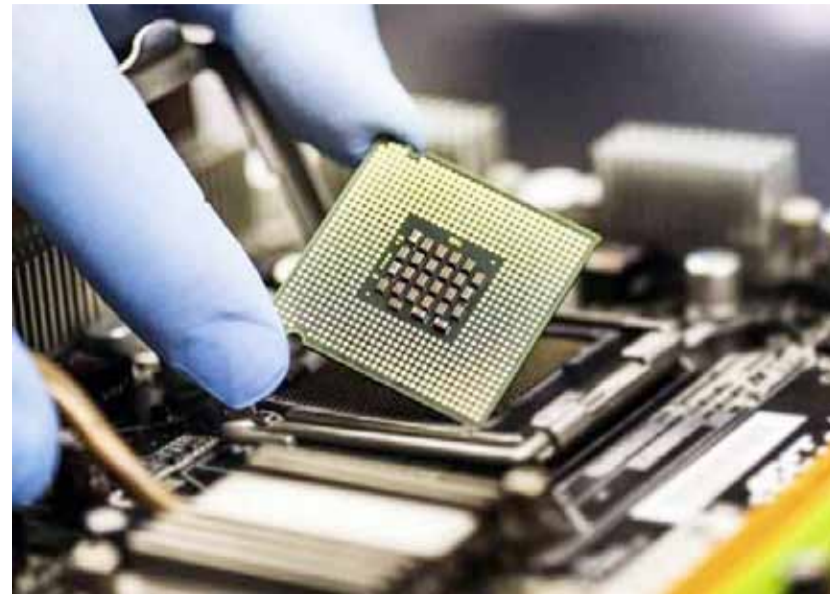
PUBLISHED AT: PLOT NO-F5, IT PARK, CHANDIGARH CHANDIGARH 160101; PHONE: 9888040061

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(\*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)



## India towards self-reliance in electronics sector



New India is self-reliant in many ways and it is estimated that India will start producing electronics products also worth Rs 30,000 crore rupees by 2026. The demand for such products is increasing day by day in the country. To install chips in these products, the country will need semiconductors worth at least Rs 6 lakh crore. Preparations are underway to make the semiconductor indigenously. Currently India imports semiconductors from other countries. While addressing at SEMICON, the Semiconductor Conference held in Bengaluru recently, Rajiv Chandrashekhar, Union Minister of State for Information Technology and Electronics, said that the government has received proposals from many companies for electronic chip production. These include Vedanta Foxconn Joint Venture, IGSS Ventures and ISMC. Meanwhile, semiconductor production has decreased due to the revival of Covid pandemic and lockdown in China. Integrated circuit production in China declined by 4.2 percent in the first quarter of this year. Semiconductor chip production declined 5.1 percent in March. Chinese electronics makers are fearful of supply chain disruptions. This can also have an impact on India, as India imports a lot of components from China.

India imports 100 per cent of semiconductors, of which half material is

imported from China alone. Apart from the chip, many types of electronic, auto and mobile phone parts are also imported from the Dragon. There is such a shortage of chips in the world at this time that chip makers are working by extracting semiconductors from old washing machines bought from junk dealers. The chip shortage doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon. The Russo-Ukraine war has disrupted supply lines, causing

intermittent or halting supply of goods. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, one of the largest chip makers in South East Asia, fears a reduction in chip production due to a shortage of manpower and parts. More than 169 industries, including electronics, have been affected due to chip shortage. In the last two years, people started working from home during the lockdown, due to which the demand for electronic

products like computers, laptops, gaming consoles etc. increased. Chip makers, on the other hand, had reduced production.

A modern car uses 1,500 to 3,000 chips. During the pandemic, cinema halls were closed to contain the spread of the virus, forcing many people to turn to home entertainment during periods of self-isolation, fueling demand for video game consoles. The properties of semiconductors or chips are in between that of conductors and insulators. Chips typically made from silicon are used to supply power to a wide variety of devices such as cars, laptops, smartphones, home appliances and gaming consoles. The chip performs many functions, such as power display and data transfer, etc. Hence, the supply crunch is bound to have an impact on the sales of cars, fridges, laptops, TVs and other electronic equipment. Taiwan is the world leader in semiconductor manufacturing. Last year there was a severe drought, which caused problems for the chip makers. A large amount of pure water is needed to manufacture semiconductors. Chip production cannot be increased on short notice, because it is a complex process that takes months. It usually takes more than three months to make a chip. In such a situation, the problem is expected to persist till 2023.

Narvijay Yadav, Writer is a senior journalist & columnist. Twitter @NarvijayYadav



## Marriage no ground to deny wife right to prosecute husband of rape



Feminists have long demanded criminalizing of marital rape because marriage is not a lifelong consent. In fact, India is one of the 36 countries in the world where marital rape is not criminalized. However, feminists and women rights activists have for long been raising voice against it.

The Delhi High Court, is now hearing a bunch of petitions seeking criminalization of marital rape in the country and the protection provided to husbands against being booked for rape. A two-member

Delhi HC Bench has observed that it is merely having an 'open discussion' before arriving at a judgment. 'A husband has no business to compel but the court can't ignore what happens if it strikes down

the exception' the Bench observed, adding: 'The husband goes to jail for 10 years if he does this even on one occasion... We need a much more incisive insight into the issue.'

Since it is not a crime to rape one's wife, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does not maintain any separate statistics on marital rape. In the year 2000, the Law Commission had opposed criminalizing marital rape, arguing that 'it may amount to excessive interference with the marital relationship'. In 2013, the JS Verma Committee recommended that marital rape be criminalized, but four years later, a

Parliamentary Standing Committee opposed it on the grounds that 'the entire family system will be under great stress' if it were criminalized. The domestic violence is a crime that is rampant but grossly underreported, and criminality of sexual violence in a marriage must be acknowledged and marriage must not be considered as lifelong consent.

Feminists and women's rights groups have long demanded criminalizing of marital rape. The orthodox mindset is that a woman's body, after she gets married, is her husband's property. In other words, a woman, whether she likes it or not, grants perpetual consent

and a licence for cohabitation to her husband. Sometime back, the High Court of Chhattisgarh had observed that sexual intercourse by a husband with his spouse would not constitute rape even if it was against the consent of the wife.

In 2018, a private Bill was introduced by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor in the Lok Sabha, seeking to criminalize marital rape, among other rights. However, it lapsed after the failure to garner support from the elected government. While recommending changes to India's rape laws, the Justice JS Verma Committee, constituted after the Nirbhaya rape case, said in 2013 that forced sex between spousal partners should also be considered as rape and punished as a criminal offence. The government, however, did not accept this arguing that such a move would destroy the institution of marriage.

The UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women had in 2007 and 2014 asked India to criminalize marital rape. One of the arguments being used against it is that women can misuse such a law if it came into force and they would file false cases of rape against their husbands. There is an urgent need for the judiciary to recognise marital rape as an offence under the Indian Penal Code.

Now the Delhi High Court is hearing PILs by NGOs RIT Foundation, All India Democratic Women's Association and two individuals who have sought striking down the exception in the Indian law, saying that it discriminated against married women being sexually assaulted by their husbands. The plea

is that the exception in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, which exempts forceful sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife from the offence of rape, must be viewed as an "instrument of oppression".

The exception in Section 375 IPC decriminalizes marital rape and mandates that sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape. Arguing before a bench of Justices Rajiv Shakdher and C Hari Shankar, senior advocate Rebecca John, told the court that exception 2 of IPC 375 is a colonial legacy. She said the court will uphold the physical integrity of women by striking it down and putting the people to notice that a marital partner's consent must be respected. "What is written in exception 2, which has been given to us from a doctrine, propounded 200 years ago by our colonial masters, does not reflect either the Indian man or the Indian woman, certainly not the Indian marriage. The colonial masters have done away with it. We continue to hang on to that legacy," John said.

She argued that the section gives dominance to the husband or the man in the marriage, while completely disregarding the "no" by the wife and making her a subordinate partner in the alliance. She contended that if the court holds the same to be unconstitutional, it will not be creating a new offence as the same already exists, but only a class of individuals who at present enjoy legal immunity from the prosecution will lose it.

She submitted that the expectation of sex or a meaningful conjugal relation

within a marriage is fair, and that there may even be a unilateral expectation for sex in a given case. "If that expectation is not fulfilled, then the spouse has every right to resort to civil remedies.

However, when the expectation within a marriage becomes a physical act based on coercion and force and is non-consensual, causing harm or injury... then that sexual act must become an offence," John said. While referring to the consequences, John asked whether the court will allow a husband, who is suffering from a venereal disease, to claim the exception and also permit it in a case where a woman is ill and a sexual relation will have detrimental effect on her health.

Also arguing before the bench, senior advocate Rajshankar Rao submitted that a "rapist remains a rapist irrespective of the relationship" as he read out from the Verma Committee report which had recommended the criminalization of marital rape. Exceptions of section 375 IPC decriminalizes marital rape and mandates that sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape. The marital rape exception, thus, creates a legal fiction where, even if all the requirements for rape are otherwise fulfilled, the law deems not to be rape if the parties are married and the woman is above 15.

Gautam Bhatia a Delhi-based advocate and the one involved with drafting one of the petitions before the high court reportedly observed that if sexual assault takes place five minutes before a marriage is formalized, it is rape; but five minutes after, it is not. The indisputable fact is that the marital rape exception means that consent is irrelevant to the question of rape in a marriage. For that reason alone, the court — whose task it is to uphold and vindicate everyone's right to equal treatment and non-discrimination — should strike it down.

Bharat Hiteshi, Writer is a senior journalist & columnist views are personal

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Have a query about Covid-19? This Book has an answer !

HUMRA QURAISHI

This book authored by the two leading scientists of the country, Seyed Ehtesham Hasnain and Arun Tewari, focuses on the Covid 19 pandemic, with all its dimensions and hues and forms.

Yes, as I read through this book, it got writ large that every aspect to the Covid 19 pandemic seems to be focused on. Written for the common man, it answers all those queries that we often think aloud: Why the infection hit the vital organs of one patient but spared that of the other? Why only minor

symptoms surfaced in some whilst others were down by more than one symptom?

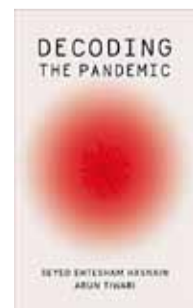
What if in future a pandemic of this nature strikes? What is our collective future vis-à-vis this virus still hovering around ... lurking? What are the chances of it striking yet again? Who all are to be blamed for this level of health disasters hitting this planet, destroying lives and livelihoods?

Actually this book has to be read to get answers to all possible doubts and apprehensions and the ground realities that exist today in the context of the virus and the dilemmas and tragedies spread around.

Besides addressing the

**The woman, Miranda, got infected and was cared for by the soldier, Adam. During her illness the woman ran high fever and got disoriented. By the time she recovered, Adam had succumbed to the infection, which most likely he got while nursing her**

various aspects to the pandemic, what I found rather interesting is the fact that the authors have taken the



Title of the book—**DECODING THE PANDEMIC**  
Authors—**Seyed Ehtesham Hasnain and Arun Tewari**  
Publishers—**Sakal Publications**  
Pages—**254**  
Price—**Rs 599**

trouble of researching and brining to the fore, all aspects and details about the past pandemics that hit mankind. "Though there had been many endemics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century --- Manchurian plague in 1910, United States poliomyelitis in 1916, Russian Typhus during 1918-22, Indian Smallpox in 1974, West African meningitis in 1996, Malaysian Nipah virus in 1998 --- none of them crossed national boundaries, leave aside international boundaries..."

What makes this book very readable is that webbed and inter-webbed in, are many details of the human happenings. To quote one such 'happening' from the book — "In 1939, American journalist Katherine Anne Porter (1890 - 1980) published a novel 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider', brilliantly capturing the human tragedy of the pandemic. The novel narrated a love story between a soldier of an occupying army and a woman who sold newspapers in the street with 1918 Influenza pandemic in the backdrop. The woman, Miranda, got infected and was cared for by the soldier, Adam. During her illness the woman ran high fever and got disoriented. By the time she recovered, Adam had succumbed to the infection, which most likely he got while nursing her."



**WNS to Participate at Q2 of 2022 Investor Conferences**

MUMBAI: Maharashtra, India & New York, United States & Business Wire India

WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS), a leading provider of global Business Process Management solutions, today announced that the company will participate at the following calendar Q2 2022 investor conferences:

Needham & Company 17th Annual Technology & Media Conference

**DATE:** Monday, May 16, 2022, Location: Virtual, Barrington Research 16th Annual Spring Investment Conference

**DATE:** Thursday, May 19, 2022, Location: Virtual Cowen & Company 50th Annual Technology, Media & Telecom Conference

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 1, 2022, Location: New York, NY, Presentation: 2:45 PM (Eastern)

Live audio webcast available on WNS's website at <http://ir.wns.com>

Baird 2022 Global Consumer, Technology & Services Conference

**DATE:** Monday, June 6, 2022, Location: New York, NY, Presentation: 2:35 PM (Eastern)

Live audio webcast available on WNS's website at <http://ir.wns.com>

William Blair 42nd Annual Growth Stock Conference

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 8, 2022, Location: Chicago, IL, About WNS: WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS) is a leading Business Process Management (BPM) company. WNS combines deep industry knowledge with technology, analytics and process expertise to co-create innovative, digitally led transformational solutions with over 400 clients across various industries. WNS delivers an entire spectrum of BPM solutions including industry-specific offerings, customer experience services, finance and accounting, human resources, procurement, and research and analytics to re-imagine the digital future of businesses. As of March 31, 2022, WNS had 52,081 professionals across 54 delivery centers worldwide including facilities in China, Costa Rica, India, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For more information, visit [www.wns.com](http://www.wns.com).

**Safe Harbor Provision:** This document includes information which may constitute forward-looking statements made pursuant to the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, the accuracy of which are necessarily subject to risks, uncertainties, and assumptions as to future events. Factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied are discussed in our most recent Form 20-F and other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. WNS undertakes no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise.

**ASSOCHAM for duty free coal imports, differential diesel prices for captive generation sets to deal with power situation**

**NEW DELHI:** ASSOCHAM has suggested key measures, including duty-free imports of coal along with increased availability of railway rakes for movement of coal and differential rate of diesel for captive generation sets for tackling challenges of power supply in several states, amidst unprecedented early onset of heatwave conditions in several parts of the country. "We would urge the states and the discoms to not differentiate against the commercial consumers in power supply. This is critical because growth in industrial production remains muted despite the overall economic recovery," ASSOCHAM



Secretary General Deepak Sood said.

He said while the Centre has allowed blending of imported coal to the extent of 10 per cent with the domestic coal, global supply constraints and a sharp rise in the prices in the inter-

national markets are making going difficult for the power generating companies and the discoms in the further chain of transmission. "Although the import duty on coal is 2.5 per cent at present, we would urge scrapping the duty for now in view of the pressing situation,"

The ASSOCHAM said while in the medium to long term, the recently signed Free Trade Agreement with Australia, the main source of imported coal for India would help, the issue of adequate coal supply needs to be handled upfront.

"In cases of power cuts by the discoms, no extra burden should be imposed on the industrial

consumers. Those who have the captive generating capacity should be supplied diesel at differentiated prices," the chamber Secretary General said. He said several states are reeling under power shortages with the situation being further affected by extra-ordinary heatwave setting in quite early this year.

"Rains are still away and we need to manage the situation with constant monitoring, jointly by the Centre, states, and the industry," Sood said. He said ASSOCHAM has reached out to its members to keep sharing the evolving situation, which we would share with the government. **AGENCIES**

**India sees 70% spike in ransomware attacks on critical infrastructure**

**NEW DELHI:** Cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure by nation-state bad actors have increased significantly and India observed a 70 per cent increase in ransomware activity in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021, a new report said on Wednesday.

According to the report by cybersecurity company Trellix, over half of adversarial advanced persistent threat actor activity originated from Russian and Chinese backed groups and Russian-backed groups like APT29 have continued to greatly increase their activity in 2022. Reports surfaced last week that a Russian malware planted from a server in Nigeria was used for a cyber attack on Oil India's (OIL) system in Assam.

The state-owned company had suffered a major cyber-attack in its field headquarters in eastern Assam's Duliaganj, with the hacker demanding \$75,00,000. The report found a significant 73 per cent increase in cyber incidents targeting individuals and positioned people as the top actor sector in Q4 2021.

Individual consumers are the top target of cybercriminals, closely followed by the health-



care vertical. Additionally, the transportation, shipping, manufacturing and information technology industries showed a sharp increase in threats.

"We are at a critical juncture in cybersecurity and observing increasingly hostile behaviour across an ever-expanding attack surface," said Christiaan Beek, lead scientist and principal engineer, Trellix Threat Labs.

The fourth quarter signalled the shift out of a two-year pandemic which cybercriminals used for profit and "saw the Log4Shell vulnerability impact hundreds of millions of devices, only to continue cyber momentum in the new year where we've seen an escalation of international cyber activity," he added. **AGENCIES**

**Indian Accent to Open In Mumbai**

Restaurateur Rohit Khattar's EHV has signed an agreement with Reliance Industries Limited to bring India's most awarded restaurant, Indian Accent to Mumbai. This comes on the heels of announcing the summer opening of EHV's forthcoming restaurant in New York, Koloman helmed by Chef Markus Glocker as well as a collaboration with Chef David Thompson for Thai restaurants in India.

Indian Accent, Mumbai is expected to open before the end of the year. It shall be housed in a beautiful space overlooking the fountains at the Dhirubhai Ambani Square at Jio World Centre in Bandra Kurla Complex.

Rohit Khattar, Chairman EHV says, "For many years we have explored locations in Mumbai for Indian Accent and our search has ended at the spectacular Jio World Centre,



the new epicenter of Mumbai. Indian Accent has a very loyal clientele of discerning guests from Mumbai. So we are particularly thrilled to be able to bring the Indian Accent experience to this vibrant city and look forward to it embracing us as warmly as New Delhi and New York have.

The kitchen at Indian Accent Mumbai will be helmed by Executive Chef Shantanu Mehrotra who has been Executive Chef of Indian Accent,

New Delhi since its opening under the guidance of Chef Manish Mehrotra, who created the Indian Accent menu and has been promoted to Culinary Director. Rijul Gulati shall be Head Chef and Varun Sharma, who leads the award winning bar at EHV's other restaurant, Comorin, shall head the bar programme. The G.M. of Indian Accent is yet to be appointed and shall report to the Operations Director, Nitin Mathur. **AGENCIES**

**Sminu Jindal addresses top global entrepreneurs at US summit**

**NEW DELHI:** It is an annual congregation of some of the best business minds in the world, and this edition features one of India's top industrialists and accessibility champion Sminu Jindal. The Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) has invited the Managing Director of Jindal SAW Ltd and Founder Chairperson Svayam to speak at their flagship event, the Global Leadership Conference (GLC), on 25 April in Washington.

The US-based EO is a high-quality support network of 15,600+ leaders across 61 countries. This year's theme for the summit, "Unleashed", promises to help EO members "unearth greater success, find greater purpose and have a greater impact". Fittingly, the multi-awarded, multi-faceted, woman of steel Jindal headlines the Indian representation at the exclusive, invite-only event. She will be sharing insights from her inspiring journey and why start-up business models build around accessibility are the financial future of a world facing an increased number of people with reduced mobility.

Jindal was the first to train the spotlight on the need for accessibility in transport and the built environment as a universal necessity. An accident at the age of 11 turned her world upside down and saw her adapting to life in a wheelchair. It changed her worldview, and the seeds of her passion project, accessibility non-profit Svayam, can be traced to the period following this. Her relentless pursuit of an accessible world has turned Svayam into a movement that focuses on creating a barrier-free world for everybody, irrespective of their abilities. EO calls the 2022 edition the most immersive and thought-provoking GLC to date with in-person and virtual forums in Washington, US, and Barcelona, Spain, from 23 to 26 April. Other speakers at the GLC include the supermodel-turned-businesswoman Tyra Banks and best-selling author Daniel Pink. **AGENCIES**



**Three days fair inaugurated to develop Haryana as Pharmaceuticals hub**



SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

3-Days Pharma Tech & Lab Expo Fair was inaugurated today in which more than 200 reputed manufacturers from all over the country participated to boost sale and export of their pharmaceutical products and machinery. According to Anil Kumar Choudhary General Manager Haryana Business Fair Authority, business for value worth over Rs 800 crore is expected in this three days fair being organized with the assistance of Engineering Export Promotion Council of India a. dot com Private Ltd.

Choudhary disclosed that Haryana state is doing export of pharmaceutical products of value worth Rs 3000 crore annually with nearly 12% increase every year. He said, Haryana

state is having continuously increase in industrial investment every year since after launch of pharmaceutical policy in 2019. He said, Additional Chief Secretary Dr G. Anupma has extended full cooperation in organizing this exhibition in which as many as 35 pharmaceutical companies from Haryana state are participating in the Expo Fair.

Rakesh Suraj Regional Director Indian Engineering Export Council giving detail of Expo told that several reputed pharmaceutical manufacturing companies from Himachal Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra and M.P and other states are displaying their products in the fair having seminars on different subject on all three days especially focusing on exports.

**WallMantra plans to expand in 2022, expect 2.5X growth**



**NEW DELHI:** Home decor start-up, WallMantra is growing from strength to strength ever since its debut in 2013. It has also overcome the lull due to the pandemic and has been receiving an overwhelming response following the lockdown. It is currently catering to the decor requirements of more than 10,000 customers every month.

The decor brand has set new targets for 2022-23, which includes new durable segments. Giving details about the company's expansion plans, Jitesh Agarwal, founder of WallMantra, says, "We plan to expand into new verticals like designer home electronics, furniture and other durables. We recently launched designer-printed ceiling fans, which have been receiving a great response from the users. We are also developing an augmented reality app to facilitate and assist users in planning and designing their home decor." He adds, "With the combination of these durables and app, the projected growth of the brand is estimated to be around, at least, 2.5X in this financial year of 2022-23."

Interestingly, WallMantra began its home decor journey with wall stickers. Currently, the brand's top-selling categories are paintings, mirrors, shelves and coffee tables. Talking about the philosophy that drives his brand and keeps it relevant, Agarwal shares, "WallMantra is driven by the desire to provide beautiful home decor and furnishing to Indian consumers at an affordable price. With this philosophy, we are able to come up with new products, designs and categories that are exclusive to us. This in turn has customers coming back to us for more."

What also sets the home decor brand apart from the rest is that it follows responsible business practices. For instance, when it comes to glassware manufacturing and retailing, it consciously ensures the avoidance of malpractices like hazardous working conditions, child labour, toxic materials, and callous waste disposal that plagues the industry.

**Porsche sales in India rise 22 pc in Jan-March**

**MUMBAI:** German sports car manufacturer Porsche said on Tuesday its sales in India grew 22 per cent to 188 units in the first quarter of the current calendar year, recording its best Q1 performance since 2013.

The brand's SUV range comprising Cayenne and Macan continue their success in India and remain the most sold models in the range, the company said in a statement.

The record Q1 sales came on the back of Porsche posting a massive 62 per cent growth in its total car sales in CY 2021 over 2020, it said.

Porsche India has further driven the positive momentum,



resulting in a 22 per cent increase in new car deliveries at 188 units in the first quarter of this year over the same period in 2021, the company said.

"The momentum from 2021's solid results, with a

62 per cent increase over the previous year, was transferred into the first quarter with an excellent overall result that we are all proud of," said Manolito Vujicic, Brand Director for Porsche India.

The sales number continues the positive trend set last year, he added.

During the recent months, Porsche India focused heavily on the expansion of its presence across the country, in addition to further enhancing the customer experience in all locations, the company said. The car maker had recently announced setting up of two new dealerships, one each in Bengaluru and Chennai, taking the total number of such facilities to across the country. "We are excited about the next new products that will once again highlight the brand's motorsport heritage," Vujicic said. **AGENCIES**

**Story Telling Session by Mumbai Entrepreneurs**

The City of Mumbai witnessed an interesting session, wherein select Eminent City Entrepreneurs Shared their Amazing Growth Stories to a cross section of audience comprising Renowned Personalities, Investment Professionals, Business Mentors, Practising Professionals and Attending Entrepreneurs.

The Session Mumbai Entrepreneurs Story was held on Saturday, 23rd of April at the Mumbai Press Club Premises.

The moderated session had 11 Entrepreneurs from various genres share their journey, the challenges they face, their vision for the future and much more. Each one got to speak on a 10 min session to make it more effective and valuable of their growth and development.

The Entrepreneurs who Shared their Stories were

- Sanjita Prasad - Co founder Amaltas apparel and accessories pvt ltd
- Kapil Bhatia - Founder - Unirec
- Anshav Jain - Founder - Bringle Global
- Abhijeet Bhandari - Co Founder - Ecosystem Ventures
- Satanik Roy - Co Founder - Hyper X Change



- Manak Lal Agarwal - Renowned Signature & Logo Consultant
- Saket Tiwari - Director - Saket Group
- SS Lature - MD- Suyog group
- Shaina Mukadam - renowned capital market analyst
- Hiren Shah - Founder & Chairman - Vertoz Advertising Limited
- Harddikk Patel - Founder - Quali55care

The Moderators of the Session were Dr. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Renowned Expert on Real Estate Sector and Rohit Chabria, Renowned Surveillance and Security Solutions Expert.

The event was Curated by Nova Realtime Solutions LLP co-founded by Sanjay Kumar Garg & Sunil Goenka, is a busi-

ness communication enterprise which is trying to create a dedicated Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.

The presenters were Srujan Alpha Capital Advisors, a SEBI registered category I merchant banking firm which assists in raising equity capital for growing companies and has offices in Mumbai and Jaipur. Rajat Baid, partner, said that "Entrepreneurs are the real gallants of the nation who add to the national progress in multiple ways and there is so much to learn from their journey. Hence this curated event was to listen from the change agents themselves". Jinesh Doshi, partner, said that "This event is a part of a series which celebrates entrepreneurship with more editions in other cities to follow soon". **AGENCIES**

**UST marks one year of partnership with Blue Yonder**

UST, a leading digital transformation solutions company, is marking the first anniversary of its unique strategic partnership with Blue Yonder, a leader in digital supply chain solutions and omnichannel commerce fulfillment. At a time of increased difficulty for retailers and supply chain platforms, UST and Blue Yonder remain committed to revolutionizing supply chain and retail.

Over the past year, the partnership has allowed UST to enhance its professional services capabilities significantly and offer retail customers a range of exciting possibilities. UST has in this first year participated in over 15 joint projects implementing innovative Blue Yonder solutions, and has been increasing its scope of offering with additional services for these projects as part of continuing efforts to help mutual customers find even more success. The company's broad range of services makes UST a one-stop shop for Blue Yonder Planning services.

The new Blue Yonder Retailers compliment UST's existing Retail Practice which currently counts 12 of the top



20 global retailers as long-term clients. The close relationship has benefited both companies, and UST's Blue Yonder practice team has doubled since the partnership first began.

UST is the only Blue Yonder partner trained and experienced in providing services for the Retail Markets newest offerings, such as Luminate Assortment and Luminate Allocation. UST is an accredited Blue Yonder partner for the implementation of existing and future retail planning solutions. As the relationship continues to grow, UST is proud to announce the following initiatives:

UST Secure A new enterprise platform focused on

cyber supply chain risk management assessments, UST Secure alone gives users a measurable and actionable approach to cybersecurity, regulatory compliance, and cyber supply chain risk.

UST Edge for Retail Designed to transform in-store video systems into vision intelligence platforms, UST Edge for Retail makes it possible to optimize the in-store customer journey. By using vision intelligence and the Edge infrastructure, UST Edge for Retail automatically identifies misplaced or out-of-stock products while also providing real-time analytics on how customers are experiencing in-

store advertising using digital signage.

Peter Charness, Vice President, Retail Strategy, UST, said, "UST prides itself on our strong client relationships, and we are excited to participate in ICON 2022 as we roll out a new range of services for the retail sector. Our partnership with Blue Yonder has allowed us to offer dynamic new supply chain management solutions catered to emerging needs. We will continue to prioritize agility and responsiveness as we work to put clients in a position for continued success."

"The relationship between Blue Yonder and UST shows how close collaboration can result in pathbreaking supply chain innovation and improved services for end users. Both companies have benefited from the partnership, and we look forward to continuing to build on our legacy of success," noted Wayne Usie, Chief Market Development Officer, Blue Yonder.

UST will have a booth at ICON - Blue Yonder's flagship global event - taking place in Orlando, Florida and online from May 23-25, 2022.



**NEWSBRIEFS**

**SBI duped of Rs 4.5 cr after miscreants tamper with ATMs**



**SAMBALPUR:** Miscreants have allegedly duped the State Bank of India of around Rs 4.5 crore over seven months by apparently tampering with the cash dispensing shutters of ATMs in Odisha's Sambalpur district, a police officer said on Monday. Twenty-five cards of different banks were used 4,630 times at nine SBI ATMs in Sambalpur and Rengali towns between September 2020 and March 2021. The unidentified robbers used exit shutter manipulation fraud to siphon off the money after manually tampering with the cash dispensing shutters of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). The miscreants would insert their cards and once the PIN and requested amount had been keyed in, the machine would authenticate the card and the process of cash dispensation would begin. The robbers would then jam the ATM's cash shutter while it was dispensing money, prompting it to generate an error message.

**AGENCIES**  
**Geetha Ravichandran, IRS assumes charge as Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai**

Geetha Ravichandran, an IRS officer of 1987 Batch, has taken charge as the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai. Mumbai is the largest region in terms of the revenue collection. The overall tax collection of direct taxes in Mumbai region for FY 2021-22 was Rs.4,42,774 crores, which is 32% of India's total tax collection. Before taking over as Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai, Geetha Ravichandran held the charge of Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Region. She has served in various parts of the country including Chennai, Mumbai, Nagpur and Bangalore.

**AGENCIES**

**FM invites US semiconductor players to make further investments in India; promises incentives**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday held a meeting with representatives of the semiconductor industry of the US and invited them to make further investments in India.

The Finance Minister spoke about opportunities for companies situated in Silicon Valley and about the government of India's commitment to be a reliable player in the entire semiconductor value chain with dedicated incentive for the sector in mission mode through the Indian Semiconductor Mission.

Last year, the government approved a Rs 76,000-crore scheme to boost semiconductor and display manufacturing in the country in a bid to position India as a global hub for hi-tech production, and attract large chip makers.

Incentives have been lined up for companies engaged in silicon semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound semiconductors, silicon photonics, sensor



fabs, semiconductor packaging and semiconductor design.

During the roundtable with industry leaders from the semiconductor ecosystem, including design, manufacturing, equipment, technology and systems in San Francisco, the participants informed the Finance Minister that they have substantially scaled their capabilities in India in the last few years and are also

collaborating with Academia for R&D. «The participants also mentioned that in view of global supply chain disruptions, they need to review overreliance of supply chain in certain jurisdictions and with the right policies and talent in place, next decade will belong to India.» the finance ministry said in a tweet.

Participating in the meeting Devinder Kumar, Chief

Financial Officer and Treasurer of AMD spoke about the company's growth in India and how India is poised to grow strongly with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat driving it.

Western Digital, Senior Vice President, Corporate Business Development Dan Steere said the company is excited to explore opportunities with the government of India to expand manufacturing in the Indian market. Manish Bhatia, executive vice president of global operations at Micron Tech said the USD 10 million scheme by the government would encourage semiconductor manufacturing in India.

The Finance Minister also met Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi, who gave a snapshot of the company's investment in India and expansion plan.

During the meeting, he expressed his optimism about the company's growth in India across segments, and how

the company is looking to quadruple the number of drivers on the platform to 2 million.

«Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman acknowledged @Uber's expansion plans in India and said that technology plays an important role in strengthening transportation and mobility sectors as well as last mile connectivity.» another tweet said.

«Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman met with Mr Mark Widmar, CEO, @FirstSolar, in San Francisco, today. They discussed about India's renewable energy landscape and @FirstSolar's \$700 million investment in India.» a separate tweet said. Widmar informed the Finance Minister that the company's plant will be operational shortly and this is their lowest-cost factory across jurisdictions with very low carbon footprint and recycles 90 per cent of the material.

**AGENCIES**

**MoS Finance Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad inaugurates PNB branch at AURIC City, Maharashtra**

**MUMBAI:** Punjab National Bank (PNB), a leading Public Sector Bank in India, today opened its new branch at Aurangabad Industrial City (AURIC), Maharashtra. Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad - Minister of State (Finance) inaugurated the Bank's branch, accompanied by Atul Kumar Goel - MD & CEO of PNB, B P Mahapatra - CGM Mumbai and other bank staff.

With the inauguration of the bank branch at AURIC city, PNB's presence has reached 389 branches in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Maharashtra. Presently, the Bank's branch share stands at 3 % and its business share at 3.7 % among the Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCB) in the State. With the view to scale up the market share and become a household name in this region, PNB has sanctioned the opening of 13 more branches in the State.

Presently, PNB has ten branches with Rs 1000 plus crore of business in the Aurangabad district. The opening of the AURIC city branch allows the Bank to cater to the need of more than 37 lakh populace in the district.

With the opening of the new branch, the Bank touches 400th milestone branch and 525th ATM in Mumbai Zone (Including Maharashtra and Goa). The AURIC branch will provide customer-friendly services, including the Bank's latest offerings like Cardless Cash Withdrawal, Virtual Debit Card and doorstep banking, among others.

AURIC is one of India's first greenfield industrial smart cities along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). The environment-friendly city, which has attracted an investment of up to Rs. 5500 crore, is expected to become a major manufacturing hub in Maharashtra and generate large-scale employment opportunities in the next 15 years, with increased opportunities for the Bank to meet their financial requirements.

Speaking on the announcement, Atul Kumar Goel, MD & CEO of PNB, said, «We have recognized AURIC city's rich potential as an economic hub that will unlock substantial industrial advancement in the region. This is an opportunity for us to contribute substantially to the prosperity and development of this region while facilitating as the first point of contact for providing a best in class financial products and services.»

Inaugurating the branch, the chief guest Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad, Minister of State (Finance), congratulated PNB, its employees and residents of Maharashtra. He said, «PNB has played a pivotal role in serving underprivileged and underbanked customers. Financially enabling this segment of citizens is crucial to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' and India becoming a 5 Trn economy.»

With a network of 10,000 plus branches and a total business of Rs 19.40 lakh crore as of March 31, 2022, PNB proudly serves a customer base of more than 18 crores across the country.

The Bank has been successfully serving the country for 128 years. The recently amalgamated PNB has emerged stronger to play an essential role in the nation-building exercise, thereby supporting the government's vision of financial inclusion and boosting the entrepreneurial spirit in the country.

PNB assures one of the best banking service delivery infrastructure and a strong branch network in the country, enabling seamless customer service and ready access to a diverse range of tailor-made financial products and services.

**AGENCIES**



**Sopra Banking Software to double its headcount in India**

**NEW DELHI:** A Coffee Connect meet was organised at the Embassy of France in India in association with Business France India, in the presence of the Ambassador of France to India, H.E. Mr Emmanuel Lenain, the CEO of Sopra Banking Software, Mr Eric Bierry, and other prominent CEOs of the Industry.

Sopra Banking Software (SBS), a global leader in banking and specialised finance software company with headquarters in Paris, announced its ambitious plan: to strengthen its footprint and increase the overall investment in India. At this event Mr Eric Bierry shared that the Group aims to increase the overall headcount to 12,000 over the next three years across both Sopra Banking Software India and Sopra Steria India. Mr Bierry said, «Our teams have done a tremendous job in scaling our business across different locations throughout the world. With that foundation, we are ready to make our next



move as a global fintech solution provider and this decision of increasing headcounts in India is a strategic and exciting step forward.»

Reflecting on the company's expansion plans in India, Mr Sunil Goyal, CEO of Sopra Banking Software India, and Deputy CEO of Sopra Steria India, said, «Our people are at the core of our business, and we're committed to creating an environment in which they can thrive. The Great Place To Work certification is a testament to the efforts we have put in to build a high-trust, high-

performance culture backed by a highly engaged workforce. We are also coming up with a huge state-of-the-art campus in Noida, which shows our commitment towards our people. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, we have maintained strong growth and our plans for India is another step in our global strategy to accelerate business opportunities locally and globally.»

Since Sopra Banking's inception in 2012, the revenue has increased from 171 million euros to nearly half a billion. The organisation has evolved from a France-centric provider to a

global one and has expanded its services to include cloud technology and an open banking platform. The organisation is focused in making finance accessible to as many people as possible and thus build a better future.

Sopra Banking expanded its presence in India in 2019 with a focus on R&D and innovation centre and is now a strong family with 1000+ colleagues.

India has emerged as a popular destination for FinTech companies because of the digital push that led to high digital adoption among consumers as well as SMEs. Moreover, the continuing government efforts to formalise and digitise the economy have led to a plethora of opportunities for FinTech players. «While most industries and sectors saw major setbacks during the Covid-19 pandemic, the FinTech industry has benefited from a second push towards digitisation with all operations and transactions happening virtually,» added Mr

Lalit Tyagi, Head R&D Sopra Banking Software India. H.E. Mr Emmanuel Lenain, Ambassador of France to India, remarked, «French companies are committed to investing and innovating in India. They appreciate the huge opportunities offered by the country, its incomparable talent pool, and its promising market which receives strong support from both the governments.»

**AGENCIES**

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About Sopra Banking Software Group : Sopra Banking Software is the partner of choice for more than 1,500 financial institutions worldwide. The rich variety of our solutions, the strength of our conviction, and our passion for innovation enable us to support our clients on a daily basis and in their future projects, as well as in their goals regarding financial inclusion. Our customers, based in over 80 countries around the world, benefit every day from our technologies and software, as well as the expertise of our 5,000 employees.

**AGENCIES**

**Valediction ceremony of the 74th batch of Indian Revenue Service in NADT, Nagpur**

The Valediction Ceremony of the Induction Training for 74th batch of 54 IRS officers and 02 officers of the Royal Bhutan Service is scheduled on Friday, i.e., 29th April, 2022 at 4 PM at the National Academy of Direct Taxes (NADT), Nagpur. Mr Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President of India, has kindly consented to be the Chief Guest on the occasion. Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra, has given their kind consent to be the Guest of Honour for the occasion. Also present on the occasion would be J. B. Mohapatra, Hon'ble Chairman, Central Board of

Direct Taxes. Senior officers heading various Central and State Government organizations and senior officers from the Income Tax Department, Nagpur are expected to grace the occasion.

National Academy of Direct Taxes, Nagpur is the apex training institute for the Indian Revenue Service Officers (Income Tax) of the Government of India. The IRS Officers are recruited through the Civil Services Examination (CSE) conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The direct recruit IRS Officers undergo Induction Training of about



16 months before being posted to field offices. During their training, the Officer Trainees are trained on various aspects of tax administration and are provided specialized inputs in Income Tax Laws, jurisprudence as well as Allied laws, General Laws and Business laws.

The Officer Trainees receive

intensive training on accounts and accounting systems. Further, inputs in Financial Forensics and Cyber Forensics are also given in order to prepare the Trainees for Investigation in tax matters and financial crimes, including tax evasion and money laundering. The Trainees are particularly sensitized towards tax payer services improving ease of compliance. Further, practical aspects of training include attachment with field offices of the Income Tax Department as well as with various constitutional/statutory bodies in India, including Parliament, RBI, SEBI & NSDL etc. There

is also a component of International Attachment wherein the trainees are exposed to the best practices prevailing in other tax jurisdictions.

The training equips the Officer Trainees with the knowledge and skills required to function as tax authorities and contribute towards revenue augmentation. On the successful completion of the Induction Training, i.e., after Valediction, the Officer Trainees are posted as Assistant Commissioners Of Income Tax in field offices and are charged with governing revenue collection and being an important part in nation-building.

**SBI Card engages TCS for digital transformation**

**MUMBAI:** TCS on Monday said it has signed a deal with SBI Card that will help digitalise and transform online onboarding processes of the latter's customers and will further enable the client to expand its e-card issuance.

It, however, did not disclose value of the deal. TCS has been serving the largest pure play credit card issuer in the country for a decade and the new deal is an expansion of the engagement, the IT company said in a statement.

The deal will help digitalise and transform online onboarding processes of customers



for SBI Card and will further enable the client to expand its e-card issuance, it said.

TCS as a strategic partner has played an important role in this digital journey for us, especially in digitizing our

core cards sourcing platform, implementation of Video KYC and eSignature features during COVID-19 period, Rama Mohan Rao Amara, managing director and chief executive of SBI Card said.

**AGENCIES**

**Economic Growth: What India can learn from China**

**Ease of Doing Business in India and Lesson to be learnt from China**

As India is a member of WTO and wants to attract more FDI to fulfill its dream to become a global vendor of manufacturing goods. The central government is doing efforts to improve the ratings of international agencies to attract more FDI and wants to capture the place of China, the global factory. Among the chosen 190 countries, India ranked 63rd in Doing Business in the latest World Bank Report. In 2014, the Government of India launched an ambitious program of regulatory reforms aimed at making it easier to do business in India. The program represents a great deal of effort to create a more business-friendly environment. India has emerged as one of the most attractive destinations not only for investments but also for doing business. India jumps 79 positions from 142nd (2014) to 63rd (2019) in 'World Bank's Ease of Doing Business



Ranking 2020'. With the aim to improve the ease of living and the ease of doing business in India, more than 25,000 compliances have been reduced by the GOI. Positive changes have led to this impressive improvement in India's ranking in the EoDB index, among the 190 economies, India ranks 13th in Protecting Minority Investors and 25th in Getting Credit.

**How to be a Global Vendor. Lesson to be learnt from China**

India is not the sole country that tries to start a new love affair with MNCs, as there are others -Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, and of course China and these all are on the priority list of MNCs. According to a study by a Japanese financial group (Nomura) in 2020, 56 companies

relocated their production base from China, of these 26 went to Vietnam, 11 to Taiwan, and 8 to Thailand. Only three came to India.

Trade theories explore that we do trade for our benefit, not for others. As Adam Smith says that "baker, baked the bread not for us but for his own benefit". 2.86 trillion Indian economy and want to achieve the goal of being a

5 trillion economy. Japan is an enemy of China and still does 7% of its total trade with China but India does only 2.1% of its total trade with China.

China has become a global factory and has grasped the global supply chain and India is not alone and depends on China for intermediate goods, semi-manufactured goods, and raw materials. From 1970 China adopted the policy of maximizing its economic benefits, as Dang said in the late 1970s that either the cat is black or white, our only purpose is to catch the rats.

China is Asia's largest economy and the world's second-biggest economy with a GDP of \$13.6 trillion because of its political structure, production strategy, population trends, and solid and huge infrastructure. The government of China provides the best infrastructure and facilities to producers and its efficiency to minimize production costs has made it a global factory and as a

result, dominates the global value and supply chain for many key industries in the world making China a global leader. Production is the by-product of all the above-mentioned facilities. The whole world depends on China from cars to phones, trains to airplanes, and garments to laptops. There are several reasons for China's dominance in the global supply chain. China's school education policy from 1970 taught theory and practice in a combined curriculum. Chinese labor knows how to produce goods that are not just cheap and durable but also fulfill the demands of different segments of different economies. About 80 % of labor in China have basic education and skill and at the same time in India, only 25 to 30% of labor has basic school education. China's primary sector has the capacity to produce and process, without any barriers and hurdles, and the final product reaches the final consumer. But in India, there is a lack of

rural industries. Both India and China roughly have the same population, but China's economy is five times larger than India's. GDP of India and China was almost the same in 1985 but after it, China's GDP per capita increased to \$8,827 and India's \$1,942. Both have made enormous growth but China has done miracles. China has filed more applications for patents in comparison to all other countries and even the US.

This is the most favorable time for India to promote FDI and to be the vendor of world economies. Our focus should be on FDI and providing a better business environment and better infrastructure to attract MNCs. No doubt India is lagging behind China but after COVID-19 it is a favorable opportunity for India as world economies don't want to put all manufacturing eggs in one basket and the second choice maybe India as India has a big proportion of the young population and MNCs need

a market for their product and India can take its demographic advantage, but we have to provide a better business environment to MNCs. R&D is equally important for innovations and for the purpose to minimize cost and saving time, side by side for skill and quality products. So educational institutes have a pivotal role in innovations and advanced technology. Expenditure on education should be increased for the purpose of skilled labor and for fresh discoveries.



**DR. HARVINDER KAUR,** S.D. College, Ambala Views are personal



## Diaspora body urges Sitharaman to allow NRIs, OCI card holders to invest in Indian stock market

**WASHINGTON:** A prominent Indian Diaspora body, FIIDS, on Monday urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow non-resident Indians and overseas citizens of India (OCI) card holders to invest in the Indian stock market.

Such a move would boost the Indian economy further by attracting investment from the global Indian community, said the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) USA.

FIIDS is a US-based institute for US-India policy studies and awareness.

Sitharaman, is currently in the West Coast after attending the annual Spring meeting of International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

In a submission to Sitharaman, FIIDS said as many as 88 per cent of the Indian



Diaspora community in a recent survey had supported the move.

FIIDS also urged the Finance Minister to expand the Double Tax Avoidance

Agreement (DTAA) to avoid filing of the taxes in the United States on the income (with

some restrictions) taxed (filled) in India.

«This will avoid a need to file taxes in two places on investment and get credit on the taxes filled in the other country,» it said, adding that this input received a 4.2 out of 5 rating in the survey (84 per cent).

Urging the Finance Minister to have an agreement with the US government on social security, FIIDS said in the last few years, many IT immigrants have returned to India.

«Those Indian H1/b expatriates potentially lose the Social Security number (SSN) withheld on their income by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Hence, we request to establish a social security agreement (SSA) with the United States. This question received 4 out of 5 ratings in the survey (80 per cent), FIIDA said. **AGENCIES**

## India's food security approach and innovations appreciated in the WTO

India's food security approach and innovations that reflect the Government of India's concern and sensitivity towards poor and vulnerable sections of society were widely appreciated by participants in the WTO seminar from across the globe.

The WTO high-level seminar on Food Security was held in Geneva on 26th April 2022 to facilitate dialogue on trade and food security among Geneva-based trade officials, policymakers, experts from international organizations and think tanks, etc.

Joint Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution, Jagannathan, who represented India in the WTO Seminar, highlighted India's outstanding experience in successfully ensuring dignified & foolproof access to adequate food grains to the most vulnerable people in the country, especially during COVID, through a series of bold technology-based reforms and landmark innovations in the Public Distribution System. He made a detailed presentation on the Indian perspective in the panel on 'National and Regional Experiences' at the 'WTO high-level seminar'.

He also highlighted the Government's efforts to forge inter-departmental data sharing to deepen the outreach of mass citizen-centric government programmes across the country. In recent times, as India's food security response to the COVID-19 crisis is being hailed as a shining example for its unparalleled speed, scale & transparency, and rightful targeting, S. Jagannathan explained these successful strategies adopted by the Government of India for ensuring the Availability, Af-



fordability, and Accessibility of both normal and free food grains at all times.

He highlighted the crucial role played by Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) in ensuring additional food security for around 800 million beneficiaries in the country during the COVID period and how the scheme continues to cushion them against supply shocks and rising inflation during the period of recovery, with an additional food subsidy outlay of nearly USD 45 billion apart from the regular food subsidy of nearly USD 22 billion.

Further, he highlighted how India's food security measures in the PDS, ICDS and PM Poshan, and PMGKAY directly contribute to the attainment of some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the field of Women and Child nutrition, health, education, and food security, being the foundational indicators of Human Development as well.

He highlighted the landmark technology-based inno-

vation One Nation One Ration Card Plan that allows all NFSA beneficiaries, particularly migrant beneficiaries, to claim either full or part foodgrains from any of the 0.5 million Fair Price Shops (FPS) in the country through existing ration card with biometric/Aadhaar authentication in a seamless manner. The system also allows their family members back home, if any, to claim the balance of food grains on same the ration card. Speedy implementation of ONORC during COVID has enabled beneficiaries to avail of nearly USD 5 billion of food subsidy through nearly 580 million portable transactions and around 650 million portable transactions since the beginning.

National experiences from different countries and world regions were shared & discussed in the Seminar with a focus on the relationship between trade and the multiple dimensions of food security, including access, availability, stability, and use, in the light of existing and future challenges. **AGENCIES**

## Ukraine says Russian offensive in east picks up momentum

**POKROVSK:** Ukraine said Thursday that Russia's offensive in the east picked up momentum, with several towns coming under intense attack as Moscow's forces attempt to surround Ukrainian troops.

In a reminder of the horrific toll the war has taken since it began February 24, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres visited towns outside the capital of Kyiv where evidence of mass killings of civilians was found after Russia's retreat from the area. The fighting gathered pace after Russia suddenly cut off natural gas to two NATO nations, in what was seen as a bid to punish and divide the West over its support for Ukraine



ahead of the potentially pivotal battle in the eastern industrial region of the Donbas.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military said Russian forces were "exerting intense fire" in several places as they pushed on with

the second phase of their invasion. The most intensive action was around Donetsk and close to Kharkiv, which lies outside the Donbas but is seen as key to Russia's apparent bid to encircle Ukrainian troops there. Tatiana

Pirogova spoke of the intense fear of living under constant bombardment.

"It's not just scary. It's when your stomach contracts from pain" the Kharkiv resident said. "When they shoot during the day, it's still OK, but when the evening comes, I can't describe how scary it is." The General Staff said that over the past 24 hours, the Ukrainian forces have repelled six attacks in the Donbas, control of which is now Moscow's primary focus ever since its initial offensive faltered and failed to take the Ukrainian capital.

Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said the Russian army shelled the residential area in his region "29 times by aircrafts,

multiple rocket launches, tube artillery and mortars." Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press also showed evidence of intense Russian fire on Mariupol in recent days. The images show how concentrated attacks have greatly damaged a central facility at the Azovstal steelworks, the last redoubt of Ukrainian fighters in the key battleground city. An estimated 1,000 civilians are sheltering along with about 2,000 Ukrainian fighters in the steelworks, a massive Soviet-era complex with a warren of underground facilities built to withstand airstrikes. Russia, meanwhile, said a city under its control in the south also came under fire. **AGENCIES**

## Elon Musk sells Tesla shares of \$8.5 Billion to take share of Twitter

Tesla Inc Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk sold \$8.5 billion worth of shares in the electric vehicle maker, U.S. securities filings showed, in sales likely aimed at helping finance his planned purchase of Twitter Inc.

Musk said in a tweet on Thursday that there are "no further TSLA sales planned after today". He sold about 9.6 million shares this week, according to the filings on Thursday and Friday, equating to 5.6% of his stake in the company. It was not clear whether all of Musk's recent Tesla share sales were reported. Tesla did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The sale came after Musk on Monday clinched a deal to buy Twitter for \$44 billion in cash

in a transaction that will shift control of the social media platform populated by millions of users and global leaders to the world's richest person. Musk's net worth is \$268 billion, according to Forbes.

As part of the deal, Musk said he would provide a \$21 billion equity commitment. It was not immediately clear how the billionaire would raise the remaining \$12.5 billion of equity financing. Musk holds a 43.61% stake in unlisted rocket company SpaceX, which is reportedly valued at \$100 billion. Tesla shares rose about 5% in morning trading on Friday. They have tumbled about 20% since Musk's disclosure of a more than 9% stake in Twitter on April 4.

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alone. Musk, the world's wealthiest person and a self-described free-speech absolutist, had said he wanted to buy and privatize Twitter because he believed it wasn't living up to its potential as a free speech platform. It raised questions about whether he might reinstate Trump's account as the former president lays the groundwork for another White House run in 2024.

Trump has continued to spread lies about his 2020 election defeat in speeches and statements since leaving office, and it is unclear how Musk would approach those statements if Trump were ever to return to the site.

In recent weeks, Musk has voiced a number of proposed changes for the company, including relaxing its content restrictions, and said he would be «very reluctant» to delete content and cautious of permanent bans. **AGENCIES**

The decision denied him the megaphone he had used to generate media attention and speak directly to his followers, which had been integral to his political rise. At the time, the former president had roughly 89 million followers on Twitter.

## World looking at India's digital prowess with respect: Rajeev Chandrasekhar



Embedding technology into governance has changed the way the world used to look at India and in the last two years, the country has begun amalgamating deep tech with governance, thus plugging leaks in delivery to the masses, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT and Skill Development, said here on Monday.

Speaking at the annual lecture of the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI), the minister said that we have

reached a stage where every global leader looks at us with respect and awe, "not just in terms of our healthcare performance but also in terms of our economy bouncing back".

"We need to ensure that the pace of digitalisation is not allowed to slow down if India has to claim its rightful place in the decade to come," Chandrasekhar told the audience.

"In the past 35 years, I have had the highs of optimism and the lows of skepticism and negativity, and I can safely

testify that India's potential has never been more exciting," he emphasised.

India has the potential to become a \$1 trillion digital economy by 2025, by tapping opportunities in manufacturing, engineering and digitalisation.

India currently has 800 million online users, and the numbers are projected to rise to 1.2 billion by 2024-2025.

The minister said that India has successfully used technology to prevail over the pandemic by seamlessly managing to administer 1.8 million jobs to 1.4 million citizens. He said that tax revenues have risen a record 20 per cent, on the back of rapid digitalisation.

"India is witnessing an incredible number of first-generation entrepreneurs, unlike in the early days where companies were founded only by those that knew people in the corridors of power," Chandrasekhar emphasised at the PAFI event. **AGENCIES**

## Ukraine city Kreminna falls to Russia: UK



England's Defense Ministry says Russian forces have taken the Ukrainian city of Kreminna.

Street-to-street fighting had been going on for days in the city in Ukraine's Luhansk region, with civilian evacuations there made impossible by the war.

In a tweet early on Tuesday, the British military said: The city of Kreminna has reportedly fallen and heavy fighting is reported south of Iziium as Russian forces attempt to advance towards the cities of

Sloviansk and Kramatorsk from the north and east.

There was no immediate response from the Ukrainian government. Russia claimed days earlier to have taken the city.

Kreminna is some 575 kilometers (355 miles) southeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

The United Kingdom has been providing daily intelligence reports publicly since the start of the war. The British military did not say how it knew that Kreminna had fallen. **AGENCIES**

## EU prepared for Russian gas cut-off: Von der Leyen

**BRUSSELS:** The European Union (EU) is ready to face the suspension of Russian gas deliveries to its member states, said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The Russian gas supplier Gazprom announced earlier on Wednesday that it was fully stopping its gas deliveries to Poland and Bulgaria, due to the two EU member states' "failure to pay in rubles".

In a statement reacting to Gazprom's announcement, von der Leyen on Wednesday called the move "another attempt by Russia to use gas as an instrument of blackmail" in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Russian President Vladimir Putin demanded on March 23 that Russia's current gas contracts with "unfriendly countries" should be paid in rubles, Xinhua news agency reported. **AGENCIES**

## PM to visit Germany, Denmark, France from May 2-4

**NEW DELHI:** In his first trip abroad this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a three-day visit to Germany, Denmark and France from May 2 amid the crisis in Ukraine and Europe's firm approach to dealing with it.

Announcing the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said the prime minister will first travel to Germany, then visit Denmark and will have a brief stop over in Paris on his return journey on May 4.

In Paris, Modi will hold talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, who was re-elected to the top post on Monday after he defeated rival Marine Le Pen in the fiercely-fought presidential election.

"In Berlin, the prime minister will hold bilateral talks with Olaf Scholz, Federal Chancellor of Germany, and the two leaders will co-chair the sixth edition of the India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)," the MEA said in a statement.



It will be Modi's first meeting with Chancellor Scholz who took charge of the top office from his predecessor Angela Merkel in December last year. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is likely to figure in Modi's talks with the European leaders in all three countries.

Reflecting the EU's tough approach in dealing with the Russian aggression, European Commission President

Ursula von der Leyen said at the Raisina Dialogue on Monday that Europe will make sure that Moscow's "unprovoked and unjustified" aggression against Ukraine will be a "strategic failure".

India has not yet publicly condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine and has been calling for the resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

"During his visit, the prime

minister and Chancellor Scholz would also jointly address a business event. The prime minister will address and interact with the Indian community in Germany," the MEA said.

In 2021, India and Germany commemorated 70 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the two countries have been strategic partners since 2000.

"This visit will be an opportunity to enhance and intensify cooperation in a broad range of areas and for the two governments to exchange views on regional and global matters of mutual interest," the MEA said. From Germany, Modi will travel to Copenhagen at the invitation of the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. He will also participate in the second India-Nordic summit being hosted by Denmark.

The MEA said the bilateral component of the visit will include talks with Frederiksen as well as an audience with Queen Margrethe II. **AGENCIES**

## Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari becomes Pak's youngest Foreign Minister



**ISLAMABAD:** Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the scion of Pakistan's leading political dynasty, on Wednesday took oath as the foreign minister in the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at a crucial juncture as he faces multiple challenges such as fixing strained ties with the US and finding a way to restart the peace process with neighbouring India.

President Arif Alvi administered the oath to 33-year-old Bilawal at a simple ceremony at the Aiwan-i-Sadr (President's House), where Prime Minister Shehbaz, former president Asif Ali Zardari and other officials as well as leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) were present.

It is for the first time that Bilawal has been given a key post in the government and assigned the key portfolio of the foreign minister of the country. He was first elected to the National Assembly in 2018. He became the head of the ministry of foreign affairs at a crucial juncture when Pakistan needed a stable hand to steer its foreign policy through the choppy waters.

Among the main challenges, Bilawal needs to fix strained ties with the US in the wake of conspiracy allegations by former premier Imran Khan and find a way to restart the stalled peace process with neighbouring India.





# CHHAVI MITTAL says she is 'CANCER FREE' after undergoing surgery

**MUMBAI:** Actor Chhavi Mittal, best known for TV shows «Teen Bahuraaniyaan and «Naaginn», on Tuesday said she is «cancer free» after undergoing surgery for the disease.

On April 17, the 41-year-old actor revealed that she was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer.

Post surgery, Mittal shared an Instagram post in which she shared her selfie after undergoing the medical procedure, which she said went on for about six hours.

«When the anaesthesiologist asked me to close my eyes

and think of something nice, I visualised my beautiful breasts perfectly healthy and then I went under. The next thing I know, I woke up cancer free,» she wrote.

It is a long road to recovery, the actor said, adding that «the worst is over». «Your prayers were in my head all through and I need them even more now, coz I'm in a lot of pain (sic)» she added. Mittal thanked her fans and followers for their best wishes and support through these testing times. «The pain, that reminds me of the huge battle I just won with a smile on my face.

I'm going to spare you the gory details, but thank you guys for sticking with me with through this. Your messages brought tears to my eyes. Don't stop the prayers yet,» she said.

Mittal, a mother of two, also tagged her director-husband Mohit Hussein in the post and praised him for being her pillar of strength.

«I couldn't have done this without my partner in crazy, the equally strong, the equally insane, resilient, brave, patient, caring, loving @mohit-hussein Don't want to see tears in your eyes ever again! #cancerfree.

AGENCIES



KULBIR KALSI |

# 'Geet Dholi' Geet's Life in Danger? Will Malhar be able to save her again?

Geet has been able to survive many life attempts in the show but this time it is going to be a very close call between life and death for her.

In the current storyline, Geet goes to Simone's birthday party where she is embarrassed by her. Geet doesn't hold back and retaliates by answering back to her insults in English.

Today, the audience will witness a life-threatening situation towards

Geet. While attending the birthday party, the chandelier in the hall starts to dangle and will begin to fall upon Geet. Malhar watches this and runs towards his lady love and tries to save her.

Will Malhar save Geet's life again? Or it will be the end of the road for the couple? Watch today on Zee Punjabi at 8 PM, the drama-packed episode of 'Geet Dholi' to find out if your favourite character will survive this life attempt.



# Was scared to refuse projects to not upset seniors: Shreyas Talpade

**MUMBAI:** There was a phase in Shreyas Talpade's career when he featured in several multi-starrer comedies and the actor says he did those films to keep working rather than «sit on the fence» and wait for the right project to come his way. Talpade made his debut in 2005 with the acclaimed drama «Iqbal». The Nagesh Kukunoor film, along with the maker's next, «Dor», established Talpade as a bankable performer, especially in the independent cinema space. Though the actor further explored the space with Shyam Benegal's 2008 comedy-drama «Welcome to Sajjanpur», he soon moved to multi-starrer comedies like the «Golmaal» series, «Paying Guests», «Aagye Se Right» among others. In an interview with PTL, the 47-year-old actor said some of his earlier choices reflect the phase of the industry when biopics or big dramas were not in vogue. AGENCIES

# Cricket Legend Gundupa Vishwanath's autobiography released

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

At a function organized by the Chandigarh Literary Society (CLS), Playwrite, and JP Atray Memorial Cricket Tournament organizers, the legendary cricketer Gundupa Vishwanath's autobiography, Wrist Assured, was released here today.

He shared his life's journey and the highlights in conversation with two brilliant cricket lovers Vivek Atray, ex-IAS, author, and TEDx speaker, and the country's leading heart



specialist Dr H.K. Bali. Wrist Assured, coauthored by R Kaushik, a sports journalist, traces the cricketing journey of wristy genius G.R. Vishwanath from the dusty by-

lanes of erstwhile Bangalore to the most iconic venues in the world. It gives deep insights into the mind of a champion, and of the trials and tribulations of an international ca-

reer that saw both despair and delight in his very first Test.

This is a fascinating story of how a shy, and slim boy is thrust into international cricket stardom, through sheer dedication and fair play. Vishwanath followed up a first-innings duck with 137 in the second against Australia in Kanpur in 1969. The same crowd that had hurled matkas on his way back in the first innings rose as one to celebrate his century, providing him his first important lesson—nothing succeeds like success.

# Kangana Ranaut speaks up about being 'inappropriately touched' in childhood

**MUMBAI:** Shining a spotlight on child abuse and sexual assault, actor Kangana Ranaut recounted her experience when she was «inappropriately touched» in her childhood years by a youth in her hometown in Himachal Pradesh.

The actor talked about the incident on the reality show «Lock Upp», on which she serves as a host, after contestant and comic Munawar Faruqui revealed that he was «sexually assaulted» by his relatives when he was around six and that it went on till he turned 11.

Munawar chose to share his «secret» on the ALTBalaji



and MX Player series to save his fellow contestant, fashion designer Saisha Shinde, in a task assigned to the players on

the episode which premiered Sunday.

«After a point of time, I think they realised that they had gone into the extreme, so they thought they should stop for a while... Once I felt my dad had found out. I can't remember properly but I felt that he had found out... I never felt that sharing about this with family will do any good,» the comedian said.

Kangana praised Munawar for sharing his story publicly for the first time, adding that she too was subjected to «inappropriate touch» in childhood. AGENCIES

# 'Venom 3' in the works at Sony Pictures



Sony Pictures is developing a third installment in the Tom Hardy-led «Venom» franchise.

The film comes following the back-to-back box office successes of 2021's «Venom: Let There Be Carnage» and 2018's «Venom».

The movie franchise features Hardy as journalist Eddie Brock and his unwitting sidekick and parasite Venom, the oth-

erworldly lethal protector in Sony's universe of Marvel characters. According to Variety, the studio is also planning one more film in the Ghostbusters movie series. The film will be a follow-up to 2021's reboot Ghostbusters: Afterlife.

Sony announced both the projects at CinemaCon, the annual trade show for theater owners.



A view of the Bhagatnawa grain market as wheat grain arrives for procurement at a wholesale grain market in Amritsar. PRAHLJOT GILL

# Pull out of IPL, for all you care: Shastri tells Kohli

Former India coach Ravi Shastri has again advised to the out-of-form Virat Kohli to take a break, even if it meant «pulling out of the IPL, for all you care» to prolong his international career. Batting maestro Kohli has been battling one of his worst phases in a hugely successful career, having failed to score a hundred in any format for more than three years now. «I think a break is ideal for him because he has played non-stop cricket and he has captained the side across all formats. It will be wise of him to take a break. You know, sometimes you have to draw the balance. This year he is already into the tournament (IPL 2022), tomorrow if push

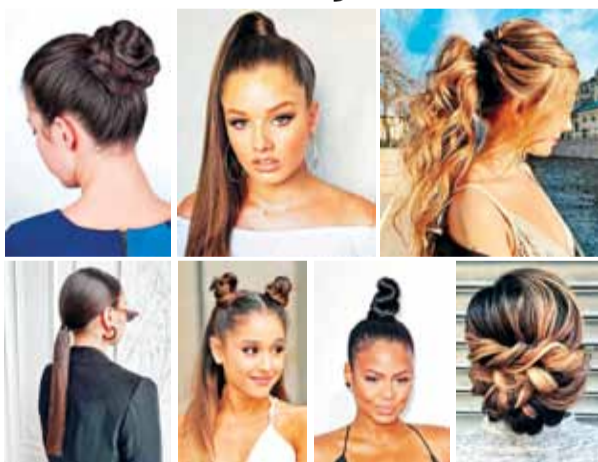


comes to shove and you want to prolong your international career and make a mark there for 6-7 years, pull out of the IPL, for all you care,» Shastri told Star Sports presenter Jatin Sapru on his YouTube channel. Kohli was promoted to the top

of the order against Rajasthan Royals on Tuesday after back-to-back ducks but the move also did not yield the desired result as the former India captain was out for nine. RCB lost the match by 29 runs. Shastri emphasised on the importance

of a break in a player's career at a time when the calendar is crammed with one assignment after another. «Not only Virat, I'll tell that to any other player. If you want to play and do well for India, you have to draw the line where you want to take that break and the ideal break would be off-season where India is not playing and the only time India does not play is the IPL,» Shastri said. Kohli, the former India skipper in all three formats, stepped down from captaincy roles last year. He has not scored a century in any format since November 2019. Few days back, after his first golden duck, Shastri said if anyone needs a break, it's an «overcooked» Kohli.

# Women Hairstyles for the summer heat



TANVIR KAUR

The sun has finally shown its face, and we're eager to embrace our summer vibes. Though, in the blazing heat, no one needs a thick mop of hair around their neck, that's why some low-maintenance summer hairstyles are a must to keep our hair looking great while also keeping us cool.

Plus, no matter how hot it gets, they're quick, don't require any heat, and remain out of your sweaty face. Here are some of our favourite summer hairstyles that will keep you looking cute while you're out and about.

## High Pony

Brush your hair back and secure the elastic tightly for the perfect high pony. Add a bobby pin to the base of the ponytail, pointing up, to add volume.

## Low Slicked-Back Twisted Bun

Pull all of your hair back into a low pony at the back of your head to achieve this sleek bun. Then, twist your hair clockwise all the way down and style it into the desired bun shape. You can make a classic bun shape.

## Space Buns

Space buns are classic because they look chic and cool with very little effort. They are probably the easiest hairstyle out there. Simply create two small buns on either side of your head and secure them with an elastic or a bobby pin.

## Braided Bun

This style gives your low messy buns a little something extra. Part your hair on the side and braid it from the crown of your head to the back, where you

want the base of your bun to be. Then, using elastic and bobby pins, gather the rest of the hair into a messy bun.

## Sleek Low Pony with Accessory

Ponytails are popular because they can be styled in a variety of ways while remaining incredibly simple. Brush your hair back, removing any lumps or creases. At the nape of your neck, gather all of your hair and secure with an elastic. Complete the look with your favourite hair accessory.

## Messy Wrapped Ponytail

This ponytail looks great because it highlights any natural texture or leftover curls. Make a ponytail at the nape of your neck with your hair. To keep the pony in place, use an elastic. To hide the elastic, pull a small piece of hair from underneath the ponytail and wrap it around it.

## Twisted Up-Do

This simple updo looks elegant while requiring little effort. Pull your hair back into a ponytail with elastic, and make a space at the base of the pony to pull the ponytail through and add a twist to the hair.

## Twisted Top Knot

A sleek top-knot is one of the most popular hairstyles because it looks put together and looks good on almost any hair type. Pull your hair to the top of your head with a brush, making sure to brush out any creases or bumps.

# Sonakshi campaigns for PETA against leather

KULBIR KALSI Mumbai

Bollywood actor Sonakshi Sinha has featured in a new campaign for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India that encourages fans to ditch leather and wear vegan.

For the campaign, Sonakshi is seen holding a bag that's dripping with «blood», she calls attention to the more than 1.4 billion cows, dogs, cats, sheep, and goats and millions of other animals who are slaughtered for leather each year.

«Through this campaign with PETA India, I hope to inspire



more people to keep fashion fun, not grisly, by wearing vegan.»

Sonakshi has previously joined other stars in calling for the strengthening of animal protection laws, starred in a pro-adoption campaign for PETA India, and penned a letter on behalf of the group pushing for the transfer of an abused elephant near Jaipur.

# Santosh Trophy is good platform to grab attention of big clubs: IM Vijayan

**MALLAPURAM:** IM Vijayan catapulted into instant stardom with his exploits in Santosh Trophy more than 30 years ago and the legendary former India captain wishes the same for the players of semi-finalists taking part in the 75th edition of the National Football Championship.

Hosts Kerala will play Karnataka in the first semi-final on Thursday while Bengal is pitted against Manipur in the second semi-final on Friday.

«All the players have a chance to prove themselves, especially the ones that have made it to the semifinal so far. This is one of the most prestigious tournaments in

India, and they will be trying to prove themselves and catch the eyes of the top clubs,» Vijayan, the greatest Indian footballer to have emerged from the state, told aiff.com. In fact, East Bengal club has sent its former stars Alviso D'Cunha and Sasthi Duley as talent spotters.

Santosh Trophy has been a big hit in Kerala with hosts game against Bengal being watched by a capacity crowd. «There have been so many fans that have come to enjoy the matches as Santosh Trophy is being held in Malappuram for the first time. Kerala fans are different, they are special.

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